

# THE Christian CENTURY

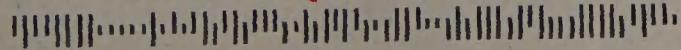
*Thinking Critically. Living Faithfully.*

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NOW?

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## Marriage equality

**IN THIS ISSUE** Gerald Schlabach makes an important contribution to the discussion of same-sex marriage (see p. 22), one of the most amazing developments of our time. The expanding acceptance of same-sex marriage was confirmed by the Supreme Court's October 6 decision to let stand lower court rulings that overturned bans on gay marriage.

Schlabach teaches at a Roman Catholic university, where official Catholic teaching is not exactly friendly to same-sex relationships, let alone same-sex marriage. He examines St. Paul's famous dictum that it's better to marry than to burn and comes to a surprising conclusion. "To burn," he suggests, "may stand for all the ways that we human beings, left to ourselves, live only for ourselves, our own pleasures, and our own survival." Schlabach urges all of us, both advocates and opponents of marriage equality, to rethink the purpose of marriage itself.

Two books were instrumental in shaping the thinking in my own denomination, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), on this issue. Both were written by conservative evangelical scholars, and both describe the process by which the authors changed their minds. Jack Rogers begins *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality* by discussing personal encounters and friendships with Christians who are gay. He points out the anomaly of accusing gay people of a promiscuous lifestyle while setting up legal and religious barriers against their permanent and faithful relationships. He also reminds us that the definition and purpose of marriage has evolved. I did not know, for instance, that

the Westminster confession of faith originally declared marriage to be valid only between Protestants.

Mark Achtemeier's *The Bible's Yes to Same-Sex Marriage* testifies to the persuasive power of his personal encounters with thoughtful, faithful Christians who are gay and describes how these experiences drove him to reexamine what the Bible says and does not say.

Both authors point out that the church's long opposition and outright hostility toward same-sex relationships and gay people personally was partly responsible for the stereotype of the gay lifestyle. The faith community instead ought to be doing everything possible to support and celebrate long-term loving and faithful relationships. Finally we are getting around to doing this.

My own evolution on this topic is typical. An elder in my church—a friend and tennis partner, husband and father—made an appointment to tell me he was gay. He had struggled for years to change his orientation, but when nothing worked, he and his wife had decided to divorce. In the meantime he had a series of random sexual experiences. When he finally found a partner, the congregation embraced both men and their relationship. But by that time he was showing the first symptoms of HIV/AIDS, from which he died.

I think that our church contributed to his death in that it failed at crucial moments to offer him the acceptance, love, and support that he needed. I am profoundly grateful to have lived long enough to witness church and state begin to embrace same-sex marriage.

## PREACHING SUNDAY?

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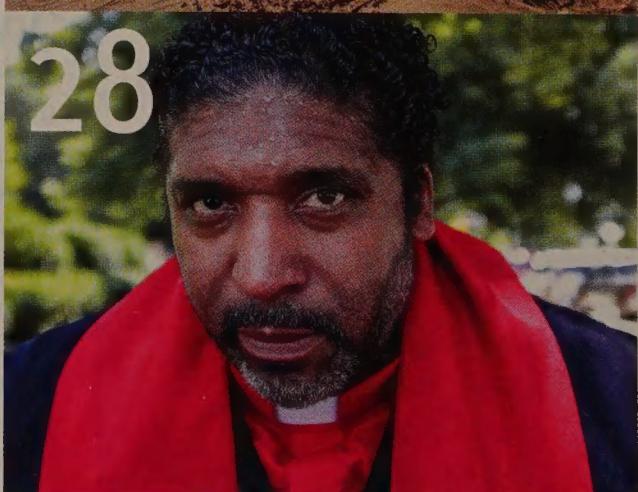
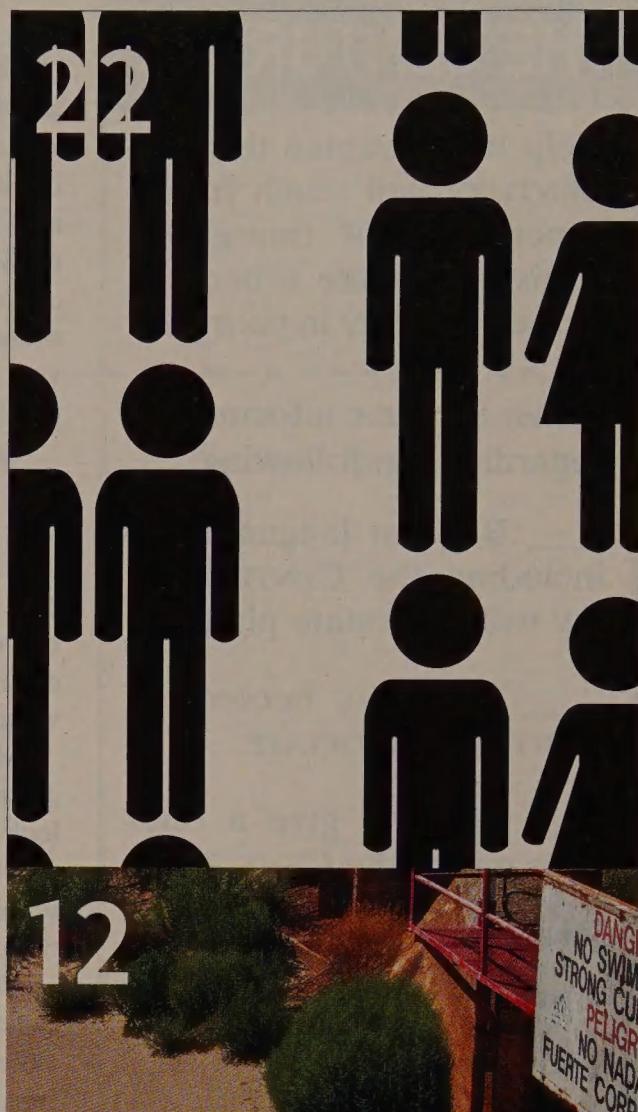
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## LETTERS

### Aliens and exiles

I read *Resident Aliens*, by Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, when it first came out ("Resident Aliens at 25," Oct. 1), and I found the book to be enormously challenging to and affirming of my commitment to ministry. In reading the comments, I couldn't but wonder if my reading all those years ago was naive. Perhaps it was, and perhaps some of the critics are right.

But I don't recall even once thinking that Hauerwas and Willimon suggested that the followers of Jesus are the most alienated of all aliens resident in a culture rife with aliens. We clearly are not the most alienated, but, as the authors clearly demonstrate, we are aliens by virtue of our radical belief in Jesus.

Moreover, I don't recall that they suggested we should retreat to the church, lock the doors, and revel in our spiritual practice, except as doing so equips us to see the hand of the emperor and expose the underbelly of the empire.

Perhaps we should follow Walter Brueggemann and describe ourselves as exiles rather than aliens. The image might suggest a bit more strongly that the followers of Jesus have a prophetic role to play in the culture into which God has called us to be the church.

James S. Lowry  
Great Falls, S.C.

Willie James Jennings's response is brilliant. As someone researching and writing at the intersection of black theology and Anabaptism, I've tended to steer clear of Hauerwas, whose eyes are closed to the social realities of those who have been crushed by the white church in America. From a black Mennonite vantage point, James Logan used the term *Churchianity* to describe Hauerwas's work, and I think that is right.

Does that mean there is nothing to learn from Hauerwas? Of course not. But there are better sources to go to,

ones that do not turn their readers away from the crucified in our midst.

Drew G. I. Hart  
*christiancentury.org comment*

#### *Out of the park . . .*

When I read John Buchanan's "Kids of summer" (Oct. 1) my heart was gladdened, and I was reminded that well-placed kindness, kindness with goal-driven programs, goes a long way in helping reorder our society. In a culture where racism is still prevalent, and where the allure of basketball and football continues to dominate athletics, the Jackie Robinson West story offered something good and powerful.

Tom Eggebeen  
*christiancentury.org comment*

#### *Faith at the cinema . . .*

Philip Jenkins has an excellent global review of films presenting religious themes ("God and global cinema," Oct. 1). However, he misses one movie: *Ida*, released in September 2013. It's a beautiful black-and-white film set in 1962 about a young Polish novitiate, Anna. Left an orphan as a baby in 1945, she is about to take her final vows to become a nun in the rural convent that has provided the only home and family she ever knew. The mother superior reveals to Anna that she does have one living relative whom she must visit before making her vows. It turns out that this relative is Jewish, as were Anna's parents before they were killed in the war.

Suddenly this young teen must decide on her identity. Is she a Polish Catholic, a Jew, or, like her aunt, a cynical secularist? In just 80 minutes, with a minimum of dialogue, the alternatives are clearly and fairly portrayed.

Kenneth Hougland  
Claremont, Calif.

October 29, 2014

## Intimate dangers

**A** security-camera video that showed football star Ray Rice punching his fiancée (now his wife) Janay in the face and knocking her unconscious unleashed a torrent of public commentary last month on the causes and prevention of domestic violence. The video prompted the National Football League to suspend Rice from the league and to launch its own campaign against domestic abuse.

The release of the Ray Rice video had another impact: it prompted a spike in calls to the National Domestic Violence Hotline. Calls increased by as much as 84 percent in the first few days. "Callers were saying they saw the video and didn't want that to happen to them," said Katie Ray-Jones, an executive with the NDVH. "Women said 'I'm worried [my partner] will kill me next time. I need help.'"

However, half of these calls for help went unanswered. "We didn't have the financial resources to bring in extra people or to offer overtime," explained Ray-Jones.

To raise the issue of domestic violence inevitably brings to the surface how pervasive the problem is—and how hidden. Most women who experience violence do not report the abuse to police, often because they are afraid of the repercussions or think that they won't be believed. Studies have shown that in their lifetime nearly 25 percent of women and 7 percent of men are raped or assaulted by a current or former spouse or by an intimate partner. Every year, one in three women who die by homicide were murdered by the woman's current or former partner. Nearly three out of four Americans personally know someone who is or has been a victim of domestic violence.

During the recent recession, many programs that respond to domestic violence—by providing hotlines, shelters, transitional housing, counseling, advocacy, and child care—were reduced by cuts in state budgets. The sequester's automatic spending cuts in 2013 meant cuts to all federal programs on domestic violence.

Congregations are positioned to be on the front line of addressing domestic abuse, but they can help only if they are informed about it, speak about it, and connect people to programs that provide assistance. A recent LifeWay Research poll found that 42 percent of Protestant pastors rarely or never speak about domestic violence, and about 30 percent think domestic violence is not a problem in their congregations. These pastors are almost certainly wrong.

"You won't discover [the problem] until you start looking for it," says Charles Dahm, a Dominican priest who heads a domestic violence outreach program for the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago. He found this out when he was pastor at a church in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood. "As I began talking about domestic violence from the pulpit, more and more women in need of help came to us for assistance," he told the local Catholic newspaper.

That our most intimate relationships can also be the most dangerous ones is a deeply uncomfortable truth. But speaking that truth is the beginning of hope and healing.

**Domestic violence is pervasive  
but hidden.**

# CENTURY marks

**CASH FLOW:** Congregants at the nondenominational LaSalle Street Church in Chicago were each recently given a \$500 check and told to do some good with it. The congregation had received a windfall of \$1.6 million from the sale of a property. The pastor and elders decided that a tenth of the proceeds should go to the members and regular attenders as "loaves and fishes" checks; the congregation will decide together what to do with the rest. A group of doctors has talked about sending their checks to an Ebola clinic in Sierra Leone. One woman, engaged to be married, admitted that she's tempted to use her check to pay off personal debts, but instead she's thinking about using it to aid homeless

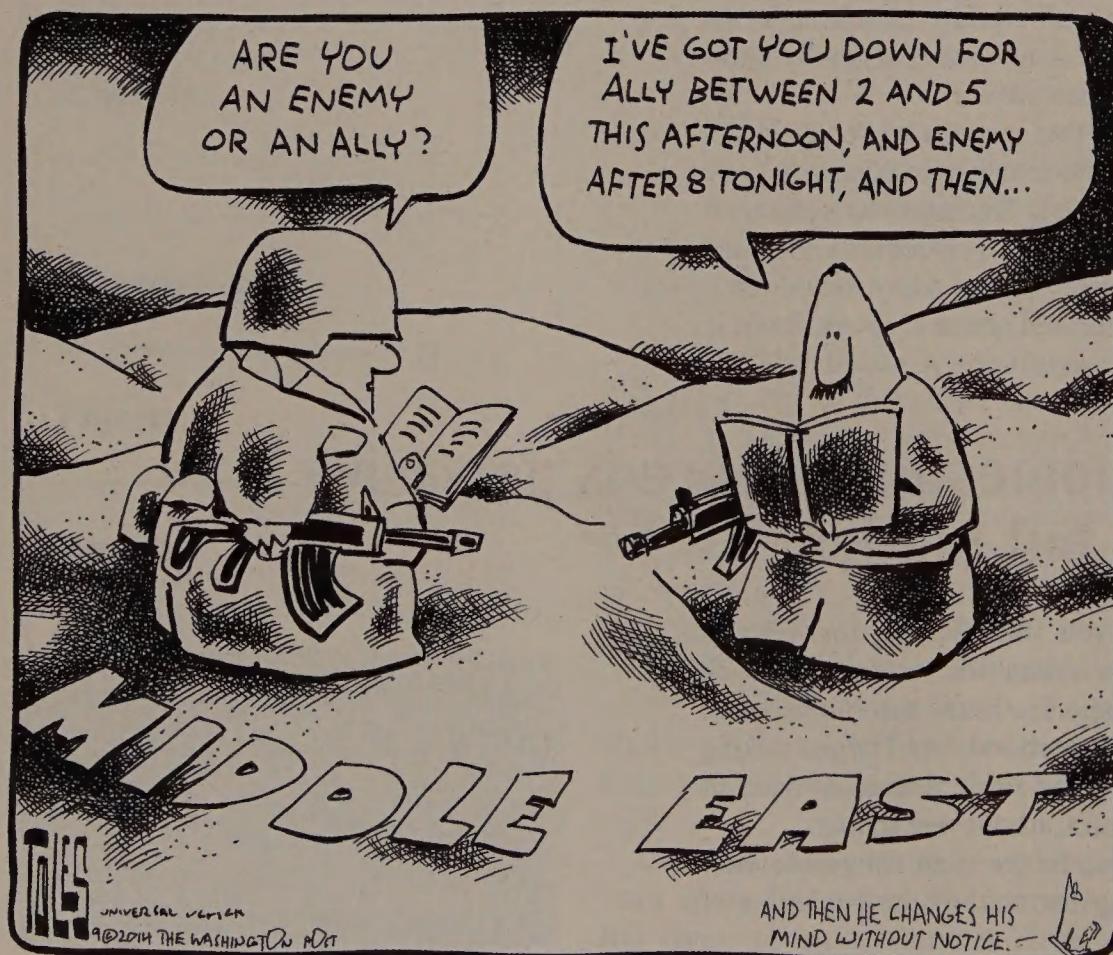
gay and lesbian youth (*Chicago Tribune*, September 24).

**WOMEN IN GRAY:** Fighting for the poor and disadvantaged isn't an aberration for the nuns on the Nuns on the Bus tour, led by Sister Simone Campbell. Their order, the Sisters of Social Service, was founded in Hungary in 1923 with a commitment to social justice. Their founder was the first woman elected to the Hungarian parliament. Another member was executed by the Nazis for hiding Jews in her hostel and was beatified by Pope Benedict in 2006. The order is credited with having spared the lives of at least 1,000 Jews during the Hitler era. From their beginning they've worn a simple gray suit that

ordinary women might wear, not a habit (*Harper's*, August).

**WITHOUT A PRAYER:** Nearly half of Americans claim they pray every day and about a third say they pray several times a day, according to research by LifeWay. Of those who pray, 82 percent pray for family and friends. Despite the fact that the New Testament admonishes believers to pray for those in authority, only about 12 percent of Americans who pray say they pray for government leaders. About 40 percent say they pray for their enemies or those who have mistreated them, as instructed by Jesus (RNS).

**LAST CHOICE?** Compassion & Choices, a death with dignity group, recently polled a representative group of likely California voters, asking how they'd vote on a measure to give terminally ill people who are of sound mind the right to request a life-ending medication. Nearly two-thirds said they'd vote in favor of it, including 53 percent of Republicans. Ignacia Castuera, a United Methodist minister and a Compassion & Choices board member, believes baby boomers are going to want that choice when they reach the end of life. Previous death with dignity efforts in California have been defeated with the help of religious groups, including the Catholic Church. Five states now have provisions for assisted suicide or assisted dying (*Los Angeles Times*, September 30).



**PREEMPTIVE ACTION:** An Alcoholics Anonymous group that has been meeting in a Baptist church in Keithville, Louisiana, for more than five years was told that it can no longer meet there. The church is forcing the group out for fear that if it lets nonchurch

groups use the building, it could be forced to let it be used for the marriage of gays or lesbians. The pastor said the church was acting on the advice of an article in the *Louisiana Baptist Church Message*. A spokesperson for People Acting for Change and Equality said the church's action is misguided. "Even if we have legalized gay marriage throughout the country, no church will be forced to marry gay people if they don't want to," she said (KSLA News, September 25).

**ZEALOTRY?** Dale Martin, professor of religion at Yale, argues that Jesus wasn't the pacifist he is often made out to be. In fact, he may have been killed because his followers were carrying weapons. Some historical documents show that it was illegal to walk around with weapons in Rome and some other Roman cities, although no known documents proscribe weapons in Jerusalem. Martin thinks Jesus and his disciples may have been expecting an apocalyptic showdown with the Roman Empire and were committed to using weapons to help usher in God's reign (*Newsweek*, September 18).

**TOP 100:** *Time* magazine has come up with a list of the 100 most significant people in history. The top ten are Jesus, Napoleon, Muhammad, William Shakespeare, Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Adolf Hitler, Aristotle, Alexander the Great, and Thomas Jefferson. A quarter of those chosen are philosophers or religious figures. Not many women are included. Queen Elizabeth I is the woman highest on the list (13). *Time* admits that its sources and methods have a Western bias (*Time*, October 12).

**DIET CHALLENGES:** A global survey by *National Geographic* indicates that people are eating better—more local food, less meat—yet diets in many countries are still unsustainable environmentally. The best country is India, since many people are vegetarians and those who aren't tend not to eat beef, the most environmentally detrimental meat. Americans eat the most packaged and convenience foods and the least fruits and vegetables. Mexico ranked last in the rankings due to a diet high in chick-

**“**Finding ways to develop a sustainable relationship with nature requires not only engagement of scientists and political leaders, but also moral leadership that religious institutions are in a position to offer.**”**

— A statement by scientists in the journal *Science* making the case for religious leaders and institutions to mobilize people over global warming and environmental degradation (*Telegraph*, September 18)

**“**God may not ask for my forgiveness, but yet I feel a need in my soul to struggle, like a drowning man, to forgive God for all God's sins against humanity. If I do not forgive God, how can I believe in God? How can I stand and tell others to ask for God's forgiveness?**”**

— Rabbi Will Berkovitz in a Yom Kippur lament (RNS)

en and beef. Japan, which eats the most seafood, is the most resistant to dietary change (*National Geographic*, September 29).

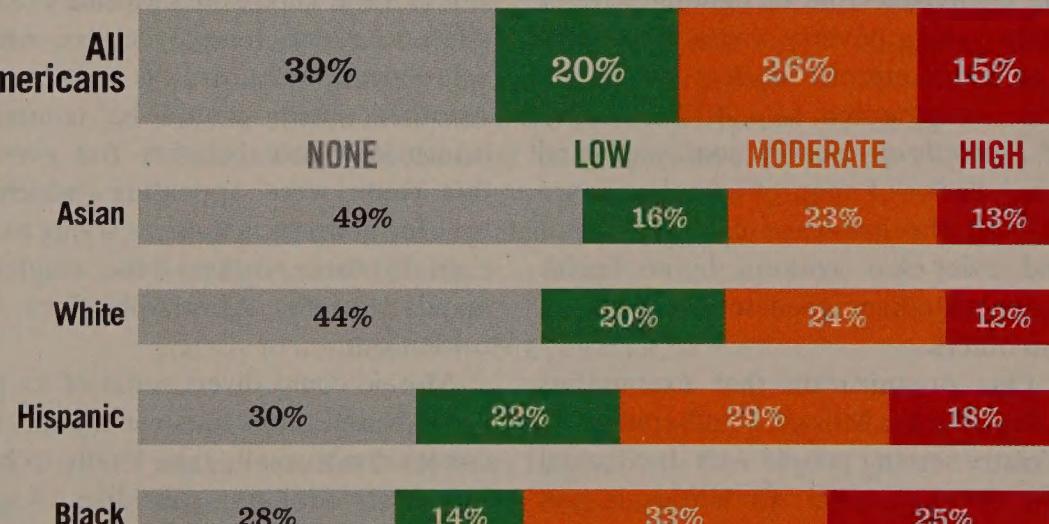
**LIDS DOWN:** A professor of the theory and practice of social media, Clay Shirky, doesn't let his students use electronic devices in his classes. It's not just that he can't compete with the hardware or the software. Studies show that multitasking is bad for the kind of cognitive work required in a classroom. It has a negative effect on memory and recall. One study showed that students who multitasked in class scored lower

than those who didn't. The presence of electronic devices also distracts those who aren't using them. "I'm coming to see student focus as a collaborative process," Shirky said (*Washington Post*, September 25).

**DUPED:** The source for "God at the Mall" (CenturyMarks, October 15) was clever enough to fool us. The story about a Florida mall turned into a multireligious center came from "This Is That," a news satire program broadcast on CBC Radio, which airs comedic news stories presented in the style of real public affairs programming.

## ECONOMIC INSECURITY BY RACE/ETHNICITY

SOURCE: PUBLIC RELIGION RESEARCH INSTITUTE



Due to rounding, totals may not equal 100%.

# Making payroll

by Robert D. Francis

**A MOVEMENT** is under way to raise the federal minimum wage, and the face of that movement is the fast-food worker. In September, hundreds were arrested in protests for higher pay. This followed coordinated job walkouts in 2012 and 2013. These days, I get a lot of advocacy e-mails supporting a higher minimum wage—and they almost always include a quote from a McDonald's, Subway, or Burger King employee.

It's a savvy strategy. Putting fast-food workers in the center of the debate provides sympathetic and effective spokespeople; it also shines a spotlight on fast-food executives and the megacorporations they run. With corporate profits soaring and American CEOs making hundreds of times the salary of the average worker, these are perfect villains.

But there are other low-wage employers. One group in particular might elicit a more sympathetic response: nonprofit organizations. Many nonprofits, including some faith-based charities and social service organizations, find themselves in the unenviable role of fighting poverty while paying poverty wages. Even professional nonprofit staffers often feel undercompensated, as a 2012 *Chronicle of Philanthropy* survey confirmed, and many classes of nonprofit employees are truly in the low-wage category: child- and elder-care workers, home health aides, custodians, food service workers, and others.

One organization that exemplifies this dilemma is Mosaic, a Lutheran social ministry serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in ten states. According to Cindy Schroeder, chief financial officer, Mosaic employs

about 5,000 people. Of these, 1,855 make less than \$10.10 per hour, the proposed minimum wage supported by President Obama and some in Congress. (The current federal minimum is \$7.25.)

Mosaic calculates that it would cost an additional \$3 million annually just to bring these employees up to \$10.10. However, the organization aims to pay more than the minimum—and it would cost significantly more than \$3 million to keep pay at the same proportional level above the minimum wage that it is now. Mosaic's overhead is already just under 10 percent, says Schroeder. None of the available options for coming up with new money to pay low-wage workers is very palatable.

research, innovation, infrastructure, and the like. And in any case, Mosaic has a policy against using gift dollars for wages—because the unpredictability of such funds could put jobs at risk.

The crux of the matter is that most of Mosaic's funding comes from Medicaid, in the form of reimbursements. These are notoriously low.

**A** simple solution would be for the government to actually pay the full cost of providing the services it outsources to nonprofits and charities. Mark Stutrud of Lutheran Social Services of Michigan—another employer caught on the horns of this dilemma—says he supports a minimum wage in-

## Many nonprofits find themselves fighting poverty while paying poverty wages.

Since 70 percent of Mosaic's costs are employee related, one place to look for cuts is with the professional staff. But one can understand Mosaic's reluctance to reduce employee pay, which Schroeder characterizes as market rate. Another option would be trimming health insurance benefits. But even if this route were appealing—which it isn't for nonprofits that are trying to do right by their workers—the employer mandate of the Affordable Care Act rules it out.

Mosaic could divert some of its privately raised funds to cover the tab, but donors don't usually take kindly to having their dollars subsidize wages. Nonprofits rely on donations to invest in areas outside the usual budget items—in

crease as a matter of worker justice. But he adds that if the government mandates higher wages, it also needs to start paying full freight.

The Independent Sector takes a similar position. IS is a national alliance of leaders in the charitable and philanthropic sector, and it has called on nonprofit and philanthropic organizations to pledge to pay a living wage to all workers. IS acknowledges that the current federal minimum wage does not meet this standard.

But IS also points out that state and federal reimbursement rates make such wages impossible. IS sympathizes with nonprofit employers who must "balance a commitment to continued employment of staff with benefits . . . and providing

services to as many people as possible.” The group urges nonprofits that are able to raise wages to do so and calls on governments to increase reimbursement rates. It also suggests minimum wage exemptions for “some seasonal, part-time, and youth employees.”

How are nonprofits reacting to the recent push to raise the minimum wage? It’s hard to say overall. Certainly some nonprofit service providers, such as Catholic Charities USA, have been vocal supporters of a wage increase. But many find themselves caught between their sense of justice and the reality of their bottom line, and they are likely to simply keep quiet.

Making noise, after all, is likely to attract skeptics who want nonprofits to open their books further, to make sure that overhead is low and executive compensation not too high. While the media love to draw attention to extravagantly compensated nonprofit CEOs, the reality is that the vast majority of nonprofits pay their executives and professional staff very reasonably at best. And nonprofits are right to say they are scrutinized quite a bit already. In many respects, they are under much more scrutiny than the for-profit corporations that have damaged the economy—corporations that, through the tax code, continue to get their own taxpayer subsidies.

**T**he question remains: How can we as a society increase the wages for our lowest-paid workers while not unduly harming groups that serve poor and vulnerable people?

First, we can support policies that support nonprofits. Congress and the president can preserve existing tax incentives for charitable giving—such as the charitable tax deduction—in the face of proposals from both parties to curb them. Local and state governments, especially in places that raise the minimum wage above the federal standard, can minimize efforts to creatively extract revenue from nonprofits by what are known as PILOTs, or payments in lieu of taxes. States that haven’t done so can accept the Affordable Care Act’s

Medicaid expansion. Along with covering a lot of low-income nonprofit employees, this would mean that more of the people who walk in nonprofit health providers’ front doors have insurance—thus reducing the uncompensated care often asked of nonprofits. Low Medicaid reimbursement rates are better than no reimbursement at all.

Nonprofits themselves are not off the hook. They can do more to connect their own workers to the public benefits for which they qualify. This is the idea behind Bridging the Gap, an initiative of the National Human Service Assembly. This is not, of course, a solution to the core problem. McDonald’s or Wal-Mart might be chided for pushing employees toward public benefits as they sit on billions in profits. People may be more sympathetic to break-even nonprofits doing the same.

Nonprofits are used to seeing their tasks expand while their resources shrink, and many are doing all they can to become more effective and efficient. They are diversifying their revenue sources, increasing collaboration (even to the point of merging), and looking to innovations like social enterprise to backfill low reimbursement rates and budget gaps.

Those nonprofits that truly cannot

raise wages should still institute policies friendly to their low-wage workers—such as predictable scheduling, paid sick leave, direct deposit and other alternatives to predatory check-cashing services, and benefits like financial counseling. Nonprofits can also better value workers by inviting their input, expressing appreciation for their work, and fully integrating them into the organization’s culture and community.

Of course, the ideal solution would be a society that pays a living wage while also adequately funding its safety net—including offering adequate reimbursement to nonprofits that are doing the work the government asks them to perform.

Congress isn’t likely to raise the minimum wage any time soon. But sooner or later there will be a federal increase. In the meantime, many states and localities are forging ahead, as Seattle did with a recent increase to \$15 an hour. Organizers, advocates, and policymakers would do well to engage not just fast-food workers but also their allies in the nonprofit community—allies who want to do right by their employees but aren’t sure how to make a wage increase work.

Meanwhile, nonprofits will continue to do what they are always asked to do: more with less.



## Adapting in Ethiopia

They warned us, like innocents, not to name  
our goat, to exercise good sense, refuse  
to see him as a pet or even, *oops*,  
as *him*. Just do whatever all it takes to tame  
the thing toward that appointed time when goat  
and fate should meet, when the dull drawn blade  
would withdraw blood from funny, fuzzy throat.

For days or weeks, we avoided eyes, made  
it a point to see the animal as meat.  
Through open window, so relieved, I heard  
you say to our neighbor, “No, you do it.”

And kindly, our neighbor did—spared you,  
and me too. But I will never forgive  
myself the rare deliciousness of the stew.

Robert D. Francis is a graduate student in sociology at Johns Hopkins University.

Mary M. Brown

Studying the local landscape

# Watershed disciples

by Katherine Mast

**THE DROUGHT** in the American West is harrowing. In California, where almost half the fruits, vegetables, and nuts for the United States are grown, the drought is labeled D4—"exceptional," the highest category—by the U.S. Drought Monitor. Though summer rains brought a reprieve to portions of New Mexico and Texas, much of the region saw the drought intensify throughout the summer.

Cycles of drought have long been part of the southwestern landscape, but the current drought trends are exacerbated by a generally warming climate. The vast majority of scientists agree that global trends of climate change are human-caused, largely due to the burning of fossil fuels. It's predicted that if the current pattern continues, the Southwest will see hotter, drier summers, deepening drought, and more severe wildfires. Predictions for other regions around the world are equally sobering. Yet convincing Americans to change their use of fossil fuels has proven to be exceptionally difficult.

At the Bartimaeus Institute in Oak View, California, Ched Myers and Elaine Enns have been working to change the way that American Christians think and act on issues related to climate change. They call their approach "watershed discipleship." It focuses congregations' attention on their own neighborhood and landscape. By working at a profoundly local level, Myers and Enns hope to build a Christian environmental movement that is both deep and wide.

Every watershed is connected to every other watershed; water issues in one region affect the water issues in another. And as people respond to the needs in their own particular place, they are simultaneously shaping the experiences of people in another.

The local church provides, Enns and Myers believe, the perfect location to foster this understanding, because like watersheds, churches are linked. Understanding can build from one church to the next.

The first, most fundamental meaning of watershed discipleship is based on the

ecological principle of watershed basins: ridge lines in a landscape direct the flow of rainfall from a broad region to a central, lower point—often a river or lake.

"Our lives are bounded by hydrologic systems," says Enns. Watershed discipleship requires first that we understand the places we live and realize that all our actions as Christians take place within a particular landscape.

Last spring, Albuquerque Mennonite Church in New Mexico invited Myers and Enns for a weekend-long exploration of watershed discipleship. Months before, the congregation had committed itself to engaging environmental concerns, but the commitment had met with some resistance. Some members were wary of becoming a one-issue church; others felt that the environmental movement has become elitist and neglected other issues central to the church, such as poverty and immigration.

Anita Amstutz, pastor of Albuquerque Mennonite, stressed that those issues are interrelated. *"People are part of the watershed too, and their issues are intricately tied to the watershed."* In April, Myers and Enns led several dozen people from New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, and Texas—not incidentally from end to end of the Rio Grande watershed—in an environmental and theological exploration of the Rio Grande Valley.

In the San Juan mountains, to the north of Albuquerque in Colorado, mountain streams merge to form the tributaries of the Rio Grande. The river meanders at the feet of the mountains, gathering force and widening on its journey east to Alamosa, Colorado, before curving south, traveling the length of New Mexico. Finally, it becomes the

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## Blind faith

Even after years living with the blind,  
guide dogs continue gazing into the dead fish  
of their owner's eyes. The dogs are not stupid.  
They simply see what eyes can't see  
behind the bloodless husk of facts.  
And soon enough, their guileless trust  
awakens something in the blind:  
not sight, exactly, but the cognizance  
that they are seen—which is another kind  
of seeing—call it faith, blind faith.

Richard Schiffman

international border between Mexico and Texas. In its 1,900-mile course, the Rio Grande drains 182,200 square miles, and its watershed is home to roughly 10 million people.

The Rio Grande is struggling. With poor winter snowfall and weak summer monsoons, New Mexico is in its sixth consecutive year of drought, and steady rates of population growth and development have put increasing stress on water resources. During recent summers, expanses of the river have run dry, exposing a cracking, dusty riverbed.

**I**t would take a full day to drive between the Anabaptist Fellowship of Alamosa in Colorado and Rey de Gloria Church in Brownsville, Texas. Members of both congregations met in Albuquerque and came away with a new perception of their shared realities.

"Alamosa has a lot in common with Brownsville, though nothing in our culture would tell us that," says Myers. "Only the watershed reflects that reality."

Together the churches are discussing shared approaches to the issues of immigration rights and environmental devastation. Acting alone, a congregation



**PARCHED:** The dry Rio Grande irrigation canal at the Mesilla diversion dam in New Mexico reflects the impact of the region's crippling drought.

a five-mile radius circle around the church's doorstep and using this circle to hone their focus. In subsequent lessons, they identify waterways and other environmental landmarks, resources

make now will set the course for the future.

Myers and Enns know that they have an uphill battle. Christian-based environmental movements are lagging behind secular efforts. "We're five to ten years behind the curve," Myers says.

A study published this year in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* came to a similar conclusion. In "An Examination of the 'Greening of Christianity' Thesis among Americans, 1993–2010," John Clements of Michigan State and colleagues compared data from the General Social Surveys of 1993 with those of 2010 and found that despite the attention to environmental concerns given by some Christian organizations, U.S. Christians remained "less pro-environmental than non-Christians, all other things equal." Overall, Christians aren't as concerned about the dangers of air and water pollution as their non-Christian counterparts and were less willing to make personal sacrifices, like cutting down on driving, in response to environmental concerns.

and public services, and environmental concerns.

"When talking about Creation Care in a broader sense, it all seems very big and depressing," says Kay Hershberger, who helps lead a Sunday school class at College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Indiana. "When looking at our own backyard, in our own homes, we can see the realistic steps we can take."

When Myers talks about watershed discipleship, however, the term refers to more than just understanding a local landscape and a particular cultural reality. It is also a metaphor for the urgency of this work. We are living in a watershed moment, says Myers. We are at a critical point in history, and the decisions we

Myers and Enns hope that an invitation to thinking about faith through a watershed lens will close that divide. 

## "Looking at our own backyard, we can see the realistic steps we can take."

might know its impact in its own community but feel like a small drop in a very large bucket, says Amstutz. Simply knowing that other churches within this large watershed are addressing similar issues is encouraging, and collaboration can help strengthen each church's actions while offering a deeper understanding.

In another part of the country, the Mennonite Creation Care Network and staff at the Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center in northern Indiana recently published an adult education curriculum that includes principles of watershed discipleship. It is being used by several Mennonite congregations.

Course participants begin with a map of the church's neighborhood, drawing

*Katherine Mast is a freelance writer in Santa Fe.*

## Seminary faculty, dean at impasse

**N**early the entire full-time faculty at the Episcopal Church's oldest seminary is battling with the school's leadership, although the sides do not agree on whether the professors quit, were fired, or staged a walkout.

Either way, the dispute revives a long-standing debate about the future of General Theological Seminary in New York City, which has produced generations of bishops and noted theologians and is the only Episcopal seminary overseen by the national church.

Eight professors—Joshua Davis, Mitties DeChamplain, Deirdre Good, David Hurd, Andrew Irving, Andrew Kadel, Amy Lamborn, and Patrick Malloy—announced in late September that they would stop teaching classes, attending official seminary meetings, or attending chapel services until they could sit down with the board of trustees. The school reported ten full-time faculty in its 2013–2014 annual report to the Association of Theological Schools.

On September 30, the board of trustees wrote that it had accepted the resignations of the eight faculty members.

"The Board came to this decision with heavy hearts, but following months of internal divisions around the future direction of General Seminary," the statement said, "it has become clear that this is the best path forward in educating our students and shaping them into leaders of the church."

After the conflict became public, the faculty members launched a website, [safeseminary.org](http://safeseminary.org), where they stated that they did not resign, but rather "undertook a legal work stoppage" after months of raising concerns such as charges that the seminary dean and president, Kurt Dunkle, had made racist, sexist, and homophobic remarks.

"We were invoking a common labor practice at the advice of our attorney stating that we could not work under these conditions," the faculty members wrote. "It is impossible to teach Christian theology and serve the formation of priests and lay leaders in a workplace environment that is retaliatory and hostile, where we and our students are suffering intimidation."

Mark Sisk, chair of the board of trustees, offered in an October 1 letter to hold a meeting of the board's executive committee—and potentially other board members suggested by the faculty—with the eight professors.

"I anticipate the attorney investigating the accusations pertaining to President and Dean Dunkle will have completed his investigation [by the date of the meeting] with your full cooperation," he wrote.

In an earlier letter, the eight faculty

laid out concerns with the school's leader: "Specifically, his references to women, non-white cultures, and the LGBT community are absolutely inimical to the commitments of our church," the professors wrote.

Dunkle responded in an October 3 statement: "Since I have arrived at General I have been very clear in frequent public and private gatherings that my number one goal is to make sure meaning attaches to the word 'general' in our title . . . When people allege that I said I don't want General to be the 'gay seminary,' I have said that. But it is only said in the context of just the gay seminary. . . . That 'just' connotation is an essential part of the entire message. . . . All of God's children, whether you are LGBT or not, are part of general."

The statement continued: "I welcome the on-going investigation and to com-



**WORK STOPPAGE:** Eight out of ten full-time faculty at General Theological Seminary, located in Manhattan, have challenged the administration.

ment specifically here (other than the very important correction about LGBT issues, above) would be contrary to the Board's request of my silence pending conclusion of their investigation ... That said, I'm also sure something or some things will emerge which I would like to put differently next time. Why? Because I'm human. But none of those wanted do-overs involve the egregious allegations."

Finally, Dunkle noted that when he arrived, the seminary was emerging from "a \$42 million un-funded debt crisis."

GTS was attempting to pay its debt down through property sales and redevelopment. GTS redesigned several buildings on its campus to form the

Desmond Tutu Conference Center in 2007, an effort that was supposed to bring hotel and conference revenue to the seminary. The anticipated revenue never materialized, and in 2012 the facility was sold to a developer.

Dunkle has been trying to address the school's long-standing financial problems by tightening up operations. Dunkle, who was previously a lawyer, graduated from GTS in 2004 and worked as a diocesan administrator and as a parish priest.

In 2013-2014, GTS enrolled 70 students and had \$10.6 million in expenditures and \$27 million in investments, according to ATS. —Sarah Pulliam Bailey, Religion News Service; Celeste Kennel-Shank, *Christian Century*

## Nigeria braces for elections amid Muslim-Christian rifts and Boko Haram threat

Nigeria is Africa's most populous country and has its largest economy. Yet the nation has only a brief democratic history and has experienced a host of serious rifts, including a bloody insurgency, corruption, and deep divisions between a poorer Muslim north and a richer Christian south.

So Nigeria's elections early next year are hotly contested, with a united opposition challenging President Goodluck Jonathan's ruling party.

## Reformed megachurch, seminary to launch NYC campus

**REDEEMER** Presbyterian Church, led by author and speaker Tim Keller, has partnered with a nondenominational Reformed seminary to form a campus in New York City in 2015.

While many seminaries are still suffering declining revenues since the economic crisis of 2008, Reformed Theological Seminary, based in Jackson, Mississippi, has succeed in building campuses in major cities.

Students at the New York City campus will be trained to start churches by pursuing a two-year master of arts degree in biblical studies at \$430-450 per credit hour. They will receive another year of education in church planting from Redeemer. The campus will likely be housed in Redeemer's offices near Herald Square in Manhattan.

The New York City site could include as few as ten students. "Seminarians are not relocating to go to seminary," said Ligon Duncan, chancellor of RTS. "They tend to stay regionally and study with institutions with which they have little theological sympathy in order to stay" in the same city.

Keller, who wrote the 2008 best seller *The Reason for God* and co-launched the Gospel Coalition network of Reformed leaders, has been one of the

most influential leaders in evangelicalism. In 2001, he started Redeemer City to City, an initiative which has helped start more than 300 churches in 45 cities.

RTS currently has seven campuses in cities such as Atlanta, Charlotte, North Carolina, and Orlando, Florida. RTS provides scholarships for about 88 percent of its approximately 2,500 students, of which about 1,000 are full-time. Its leaders hope to do the same in New York.

The dean of RTS in New York will be James Anderson, academic dean for the seminary's global program; its top administrator will be Steve Wallace, currently RTS's chief operations officer.

Many seminaries are attempting to expand through distance learning, a shift RTS has avoided. "We think there's a loss of mentoring in modern theological seminaries with virtual or distance education, a loss of thickness," Duncan said. "We're trying to make it affordable in an environment that's incredibly expensive."

Redeemer is part of the Presbyterian Church in America, the second largest Presbyterian denomination in the country, a group that formed in 1973. However, many of its church plants are not affiliated with the denomination.

RTS was founded in 1963 to teach Reformed theology and uphold biblical inerrancy. Currently, about two-thirds of its students affiliate with the Presbyterian or Dutch Reformed traditions, while the remaining third align with Baptist, Anglican, or Methodist traditions.

New York already serves as home to many seminaries, including Union Theological Seminary, New York Theological Seminary, and others. But the city does not have an oversaturation of seminaries per person, said Daniel Aleshire, executive director of the Association of Theological Schools, the main accrediting body for more than 270 seminaries and graduate schools.

"If any school can make it work, RTS would be among them," Aleshire said.

About 30 new seminaries have been founded in the United States in the last five years, due in part to a significant number of new Asian-American enrollments, Aleshire said.

"A seminary doesn't go to a location; it goes to a constituency," Aleshire said of RTS's move. "The question is, what is it about this kind of religious expression that seems to have found expression in the city?" —Sarah Pulliam Bailey, Religion News Service

Current dynamics could push Nigeria into its most volatile moment since a civil war in the late 1960s. However, optimists say that carrying off free and fair elections could help build a more mature democracy.

“The security environment in Nigeria is likely to deteriorate in connection with the elections due to an increased risk of terrorism, political tensions, and localized electoral violence,” said Thomas Hansen, a senior analyst for Africa at Control Risks, a U.K.-based security consulting firm.

Nigeria boasts Africa’s largest oil output, mostly in the south, and previous conflicts there have raised oil prices worldwide. The extremist group Boko Haram is grabbing land in the chaotic northeast, conducting attacks in neighboring countries, intensifying religious tensions, and draining national resources.

Nigeria’s economy is already in turmoil with enormous oil wealth in a place where most people live in abject poverty, says E.J. Hogendoorn at the International Crisis Group in Washington, D.C., who adds that a serious crisis would ripple outward.

“Large-scale civil strife would decimate the economy of the entire region,” he said.

Civil war is not a “likely scenario,” Hansen said, since Nigeria’s elites have an interest in keeping the oil flowing and the nation muddling through. But tensions between the north and south are already intensifying, and no one is quite sure how bad it will get.

Technically, no one is yet campaigning for the 2015 elections. But already Nigerian parks and public spaces are filling with posters and banners for what could be the country’s first real contest since the restoration of democracy in 1999.

In Abuja, where President Jonathan is in power, signs say things such as “One good term deserves another” and show pictures of the president looking pensive or grinning under his signature hat.

On the other side of the political ledger, opposition groups that once competed with each other have joined forces to form the All Progressives Congress. That party will challenge the ruling People’s Democratic Party, which has been in power for the past 14 years.

If the new combined opposition party chooses a single candidate, it has a chance



**NORTH-SOUTH RIFT:** A family in a suburb of Lagos, in southern Nigeria, asks for “More Blessing from God” with a sign on their motorbike. Elections in 2015 will come amid mistrust between the largely Christian south and the largely Muslim north.

of defeating the ruling party, according to Abubakar Umar Kari, a University of Abuja political science lecturer. However, potential candidates may not stick with the party if not chosen.

“If they lose the primaries,” Kari said, they may “leave the party or help the party.”

While there is overlap, the two rival blocs roughly represent northern and southern leadership, with the ruling party under the southern-based Jonathan and the opposition led by northerners.

After the 2011 elections some 1,000 people were killed in clashes between Muslims, who generally support northern leadership, and Christians, who generally support southern leadership.

The founders of Nigeria’s democracy saw this coming and arranged what they called a “gentlemen’s agreement” in which power and the presidency would rotate between north and south every eight years.

The arrangement broke down after northern president Umaru Yar’Adua died in office in 2010, leaving then Vice President Jonathan from the south in charge. As a result, northerners have held the presidency for only three of the last 15 years.

Northerners blame southern politicians for neglecting their region, while southerners complain that northern elites take oil profits from the south, bank them, and leave ordinary people in the north impoverished.

In the Middle Belt between north and south, many say that 2015 will be a bloodbath no matter who wins, according to Hafsat Baba, a local opposition politician in the city of Kaduna. But the election, she said, must go forward despite the danger of violence.

“The government, we are holding them accountable,” she said. “They must conduct free, fair, and credible elections. That is what they promised us and that is what we are looking for.”

Three northern states have been under emergency rule for more than a year as the Boko Haram insurgency continues to grow. Thousands have been killed and hundreds are missing this year alone. It’s unclear if free elections can take place in war zones, with the risk of even deeper tension over northern representation in the political process.

In the south, Nigeria is losing as much as \$1 billion a month to oil theft, and Nigerian oil elites are accused of paying tens of thousands of former militants not to fight.

Transparency International ranks Nigeria as the 33rd most corrupt country in the world. The situation angers ordinary Nigerians and creates pervasive distrust—and public discontent is the most dangerous issue in the 2015 election, said Kari. The result is “an army of youths who are jobless, illiterate, poor and who have nothing to lose.” —Heather Murdock, *The Christian Science Monitor*

## Muslim scholars challenge 'Islamic State' in open letter

More than 120 Muslim scholars from around the world endorsed an open letter to the "fighters and followers" of the so-called Islamic State, denouncing them as un-Islamic in the most Islamic of terms.

Relying heavily on the Qur'an, the 18-page letter released in late September picks apart the extremist ideology of the militants, whose bid to establish a transnational Islamic state in Iraq and Syria has left a wake of brutal death and destruction.

Even translated into English, the letter will still sound strange to most Americans, said Nihad Awad, executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, who released it in Washington with ten other American Muslim religious and civil rights leaders.

"The letter is written in Arabic," Awad said. "It is using heavy classical religious texts and classical religious scholars that ISIS has used to mobilize young people to join its forces."

Even mainstream Muslims, he said, may find it difficult to understand. A translated 24-point summary of the letter includes the following: "It is forbidden in Islam to torture"; "It is forbidden in Islam to attribute evil acts to God"; and "It is forbidden in Islam to declare people non-Muslims until he (or she) openly declares disbelief."

Awad said its aim is to offer a comprehensive Islamic refutation, "point by point," to the philosophy of IS and the violence it has perpetrated. The letter's authors include well-known religious and scholarly figures in the Muslim world, including Sheikh Shawqi Allam, the grand mufti of Egypt, and Sheikh Muhammad Ahmad Hussein, the mufti of Jerusalem and All Palestine.

This is not the first time Muslim leaders have joined to condemn IS. The chairman of the Central Council of Muslims in Germany, Aiman Mazyek, for example, told the nation's Muslims that they should speak out against the "terrorists and murderers" who fight for IS and who have dragged Islam "through the mud."

But the Muslim leaders who endorsed the letter called it an unprecedented refutation of IS ideology from a collaboration of religious scholars. It is addressed to the group's self-anointed leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and "the fighters and followers of the self-declared 'Islamic State.'"

But the words *Islamic State* are in quotes, and the Muslim leaders who released the letter asked people to stop using the term, arguing that it plays into the group's unfounded logic that it is protecting Muslim lands from non-Muslims and is resurrecting the caliphate—a state, governed by a Muslim leader, that once controlled vast swaths of the Middle East.

"Please stop calling them the 'Islamic State,' because they are not a state and they are not a religion," said Ahmed Bedier, a Muslim and the president of United Voices for America, a nonprofit that encourages minority groups to engage in civic life.

Christian and Jewish leaders have also spoken out and say they hope to dissuade youth from joining IS ranks by developing an alternative worldview that counters the group's religious claims.

"To offer a different worldview endorsed by religions, as well as governments, in the long term will go a long way to defeating its appeal to those who are looking to join them," said Antonios S.

Kireopoulos of the National Council of Churches in the United States, which represents about 45 million Christians.

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby said in a late September speech that if "we struggle against a call to eternal values, however twisted and perverted they may be, without a better story, we will fail in the long term."

Response to the extremists, he said, must "be undertaken on an ideological and religious basis that sets out a more compelling vision, a greater challenge and a more remarkable hope than that offered by ISIL. We must face the fact that for some young Muslims the attractions of jihadism outweigh the materialism of a consumer society."

Rabbi David Rosen, the American Jewish Committee's international director of interreligious affairs, said there are many interreligious efforts to condemn violence done in the name of religion.

"Of course, there is little that religious leaders can do other than exercise whatever moral authority they have," he said. "In other words, any 'coalition' is more for the sake of the good name of religion . . . than any ability to thwart religious extremism, which portrays religious leadership that opposes it as Uncle Toms at best, if not collaborators with the devil." —Lauren Markoe, Religion News Service; Kathryn Marchocki, USA Today, added source



LAUREN MARKOE / RELIGION NEWS SERVICE

**THEOLOGICAL BATTLE:** Nihad Awad (center), executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, and more than ten Muslim-American leaders endorsed a letter written by more than 100 Islamic scholars that denounces ISIS with references to sacred Muslim texts.

## On Supreme Court docket: Beards, church signage, and Jerusalem

A Christian pastor in Arizona, a Muslim prisoner in Arkansas, and an 11-year-old Jewish boy born in Jerusalem will present the Supreme Court with three chances in the next few months to rule on cases with religious overtones.

"It shows how intertwined religion is with political life," said Marc Stern, general counsel for the American Jewish Committee. "As much as one talks about separation of church and state, it's not so simple to disentangle sometimes."

Good News Presbyterian Church in Gilbert, Arizona, lives on a shoestring. Its Sunday services are held at a senior living facility. In the past, it used an elementary school.

The church, which has only a couple dozen members, is heavily dependent on signs posted around town to advertise its service hours and location. Under Gilbert's signage code, those temporary directional signs are dwarfed by others that can be much larger and stay on public property much longer—political campaign signs, for instance.

For six years, the church and its pastor, Clyde Reed, have waged a legal battle against the town for equal treatment. Its free-speech claim is that noncommercial signs should be treated similarly. Although political signs can be as large as 32 square feet and stand for up to five months in some cases, the church's signs are limited to six square feet and to being posted no more than 12 hours before each service.

Though the dispute focuses only on the town signage code, the church's lawyers from Alliance Defending Freedom, which focuses on religious freedom issues, say it applies to billboards, news racks, picketing, cable broadcast signals, and video games.

The town says the restrictions are based on the reasons for posting signs—and that elections are different from directions.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit sided with the town in a divided ruling.

Judge Paul Watford, who was named to the bench by President Obama and is a potential Supreme Court nominee, dissented. He noted that the time limitation on Good News's signs relegates them mostly to darkness.

The town treats political and ideological speech as more valuable, Watford said, "and therefore entitled to greater protection from regulation than speech promoting events sponsored by non-profit organizations. That is precisely the value judgment that the First and 14th Amendments forbid Gilbert to make."

The Supreme Court has been particularly sensitive to the perception that religious speech is discriminated against, said Paul Smith, chair of appellate practice at Jenner and Block law firm.

Gregory Holt, also known as Abdul Maalik Muhammad, brought his suit



under the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, passed unanimously by Congress in 2000. Like the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993, the statute is intended to protect religious rights.

He convinced the Supreme Court to hear his case with a 15-page, handwritten petition, something the justices wouldn't normally look at.

Holt's grievance stems from the Arkansas Department of Corrections rule prohibiting beards unless medically required—a policy more than 40 other prison systems do not share. Many Muslims wear beards as part of their religious faith; Holt has agreed to keep his no longer than a half inch.

"This is a matter of grave importance, pitting the rights of Muslim inmates against a system that is hostile to these views," he wrote in his petition.

The state argues that long beards can be used to hide weapons and contraband.

Both the federal district and appeals courts ruled against Holt, even though a

magistrate who heard testimony said it was "almost preposterous" to think he could hide a weapon in his beard. The judges reasoned that Holt had been granted several other religious rights, such as a prayer rug, a special diet, and holiday observances, and they deferred to the state's judgment about its security needs.

The federal government and 16 religious and law enforcement groups have lined up behind Holt, and the Justice Department cited what it called the state's "exaggerated fears or mere speculation" about security.

A third case is that of Menachem Binyamin Zivotofsky, born in 2002 in Jerusalem, a holy city claimed by both Israelis and Palestinians—and not recognized by the U.S. government as part of any country.

Under long-standing U.S. policy, Zivotofsky's birthplace was listed on his passport as "Jerusalem"—period. His parents went to court in 2003 to change it to "Jerusalem, Israel." They later agreed to settle for simply "Israel."

For more than a decade, the family has been at the center of a legal battle between the executive and legislative branches that has had judges digging through founding documents and researching policies dating back to George Washington's administration.

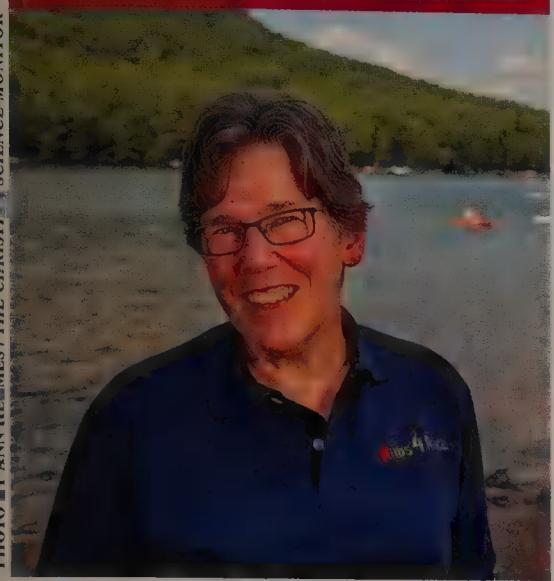
"The status of the city of Jerusalem is one of the most contentious issues in recorded history," the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit noted last year.

Congress passed a wide-ranging foreign relations law in 2003 requiring that Israel be recorded as the place of birth for Americans born in Jerusalem, if they request it. President George W. Bush indicated he would not abide by that provision, which runs counter to U.S. policy in the Middle East. President Obama has stuck by that position.

Until now, federal courts have sided with the president. Though Congress has a role to play in passports and immigration, courts have ruled that presidents have the power to recognize foreign nations.

The law passed by Congress "runs headlong into a carefully calibrated and long-standing executive branch policy of neutrality toward Jerusalem," the appeals court ruled. —Richard Wolf, *USA Today*

PHOTO BY JARRAGUTT/F/VIACREATIVE COMMONS



With her flashing eyes and the constant cluster of children around her, **Peggy Stevens** is like Mother Ginger from *The Nutcracker*—that is, a Christian Mother Ginger who can recite a Jewish bread blessing and who looks forward to the *iftar* dinners that end the daily fast during Ramadan.

Stevens is the founder of Kids4Peace Boston, a chapter of Kids4Peace International. Begun in Jerusalem in 2002, the nonprofit runs centers in several U.S. cities. The Boston center operates an interfaith summer exchange camp that brings together 12-year-olds of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faiths from Israel and the Palestinian territories with those from the Boston area to promote dialogue and leadership skills.

The participants spend a week at Camp Merrowvista in Center Tuftonboro, New Hampshire, and then a week in Boston learning about interfaith communication.

The idea to open Kids4Peace Boston emerged after Stevens traveled to Jerusalem in 2009 with her interfaith book group, Daughters of Abraham.

"I had never done something that was explicitly about peace," she said. "But it just seemed like something I should do."

Stevens, who had worked in education since graduating from college, repeatedly came in contact with Kids4Peace International. Its participants or employees seemed to be everywhere she went. They told her about the impact of their programs, as well as the

challenges they faced because of a lack of resources.

Stevens and some Daughters of Abraham members began a two-year process of starting a chapter of the organization. Fund-raising loomed large—it costs about \$1,500 to bring each Israeli or Palestinian child to the United States. And a sliding scale payment plan for low-income students from Boston meant that many of their costs needed to be covered as well.

But in 2011, after having contact with their "peace pals"—pen pals arranged by the organization—the first set of campers finally met face to face.

The hands-on activities have an underlying message of interfaith understanding. In one activity, the children receive logs, ropes, paddles, and life jackets and are asked to build a raft. They talk about the story of Noah building his ark, which appears in all three religion's texts. Afterward, the students discuss their challenges in cooperating to build the raft.

"You can talk about learning to get along and what do you do when you have trouble deciding," Stevens said, "or you can build a raft."

Stevens plans to extend the program through high school, talking about how the world looks to children in the United States compared with how it looks to children in Israel and the Palestinian territories, who may have daily contact with violence.

None of the Israeli or Palestinian children had to drop out of this year's program, despite the violence in the Gaza region.

"This time people are more determined because [news coverage] was so focused on the killing of children and teenagers," she said. "It makes our work more important than ever."

The program seems to have been nearly as influential for the parents, who were "this group of people who were really different and didn't know each other," said Julie Dalton. "So as a group we agreed that . . . we could ask each other anything we wanted."

Hannah Alghool's son Eyal, who is Palestinian-American, participated in the 2011 summer camp.

"The parents, the kids, the way I see

them come together, it's a wonderful feeling," she said. "It's a peaceful feeling. And I hope that we can pass that on to more and more generations." —Caroline Kelly, *The Christian Science Monitor*



Episcopal Church presiding bishop **Katharine Jefferts Schori**, the first woman elected to head a national branch of the worldwide Anglican Communion, announced in late September that she would not seek a second nine-year term in office.

"I believe I can best serve this church by opening the door for other bishops to more freely discern their own vocation to this ministry," Jefferts Schori, 60, said in a statement. "I will continue to engage us in becoming a more fully diverse church, spreading the gospel among all sorts and conditions of people, and wholeheartedly devoted to God's vision of a healed and restored creation."

Jefferts Schori, a trained marine biologist, previously served as bishop of Nevada. Her term as the 26th presiding bishop of the 2-million-member Episcopal Church will end at the conclusion of the Episcopalians' General Convention in Salt Lake City in June 2015.

A nominating committee is expected to present the church with five nominees to succeed Jefferts Schori. Likely candidates could include Bishop Ian Douglas of Connecticut, Bishop Shannon Johnston of Virginia, and Bishop Michael Curry of North Carolina.

Under church law, presiding bishops must be able to complete a full nine-year term before hitting the mandatory retirement age of 72, limiting candidates to those younger than 63 at next year's convention. —Sarah Pulliam Bailey, Religion News Service

# LIVING BY The Word

Sunday, November 2 / All Saints Day  
Revelation 7:9-17

I HAVE a love-hate relationship with the book of Revelation. Actually, it's more like a love-fear relationship. With a whole lot of fear.

My phobia concerning the last book of the Bible can be traced to my coming of age in the late 1970s and early '80s. When I was about nine, I went to a youth event at my church, where we saw *A Thief in the Night*, the 1972 Russell Doughten film that depicts the Rapture and the Great Tribulation. The film and its sequels—*A Distant Thunder* (1978), *Image of the Beast* (1981), and *The Prodigal Planet* (1983)—would give *Friday the 13th*, *Carrie*, and the rest of those '70s horror films a run for their money.

Needless to say, I came away from the movie a bit unnerved. Did I really believe in Jesus? Would I be left behind?

*A Thief in the Night*—along with the end times novel *666*, by Salem Kirban—made for a number of sleepless nights in my youth. And it made me afraid of the book of Revelation.

So when I first looked at the lectionary texts for this Sunday, I didn't really want to write about the one from the book that scared me as a child. Besides, what in the world does this passage have to do with All Saints Day?

Then I read the passage.

Now, Revelation is filled with some fantastical and scary stuff. But this passage isn't scary. In fact, reading it brought me a bit of joy.

A great, multicultural multitude stands before God's throne and the Lamb of God, waving palm branches and giving praise to God. These people from every nation and language have been through a great ordeal. But now, as the old hymn says, the strife is over. Hunger and thirst are no more. As I used to hear growing up, there will be no more cryin' and no more dyin'.

This passage is about the end times, but it is about a future hope, not a future calamity. It reminds us that not all endings are bad, and that hope is always present—now and in the not yet.

I remember when I faced an end time. It was 2007, and I had been leading a new church start in Minneapolis. After declining attendance and sheer exhaustion, I decided, with a core group of others, to close the church. It didn't feel good. I had hoped this would be a long-lasting ministry. The world that I had known for three years was ending, and it was painful.

But in the midst of that pain, I started to hear about how Community of Grace made a difference in people's lives. I heard from a dear friend who had felt estranged from church

for years because he is gay. He was able to learn that yes, he does belong at Christ's table.

It was then that I had a small foretaste of that great celebration described in Revelation 7. The closing of a new church start was a hard ending, but it was also a good ending. It was a sneak peek at the big party God will be throwing in the future.

This doesn't mean we won't face trials, even great ordeals like the multitude in the passage has been through. What it does mean is that those end times that come up in our lives—the pink slip, the scary diagnosis, the sick family member—don't have the final word. As followers of Jesus Christ, we believe that we are never alone. Christ is with us in the present and will welcome us to a glorious party in the future.

*A Thief in the Night* did get one thing right. Those of us who are Christ followers will face trials, long before anything like a rapture happens. The great multitude has been to hell and back, but they remain faithful.

This passage is perfect for All Saints, because it gets us beyond the usual commemoration of this day. Yes, it is important to remember those who have died in the last year, but this is so much more than that. We remember the saints who are no longer with us, and we look forward to the day when we and all those dead saints stand together praising God.

A few years ago, I traveled to Florida to attend my uncle's funeral. He was only 60 when he died, but diabetes had taken a massive toll on his body. The funeral took place in July in a small Apostolic church near Sanford. African-American funerals tend to be part memorial and part Sunday evening revival. Uncle David's funeral was no different.

As I sat there with my parents, my partner, and other relatives, the sanctuary came alive with music and the pastor's stirring words. That service reminded me—reminded all of us—that even in the midst of our pain and mourning, we know that death doesn't have the final word. There was hope—hope in the coming resurrection, hope in the day when all creation will be healed.

There's a song we sang in the Baptist church I grew up in:

By and by, when the morning comes,  
When all the saints of God are finally home,  
We will tell the story of how we overcome,  
And we'll understand it better, by and by.

The gathering depicted in Revelation is the time we tell how we have overcome. We will gather and understand all that has been cloudy. We will understand it better, by and by.

Maybe Revelation isn't so scary after all.

# Reflections on the lectionary

Sunday, November 9  
Matthew 25:1-13

**GOING HOME** can be rough. My hometown is Flint, Michigan, a city about 70 miles north of Detroit that was immortalized in Michael Moore's *Roger and Me*. That 1989 documentary showed people how Flint fared as the auto industry, the main industry in Flint, started contracting in the '80s.

People used to ask me if things in Flint were really that bad. I would say that things were tough but not as bad as the disaster Moore describes. Now I would say that things are far worse.

What's happening in Flint mirrors what's going on in Detroit, just on a smaller scale. Driving around town with my husband, Daniel, is always eye-opening. Well-kept homes have been abandoned, the siding and copper taken out. I see what my hometown has become, and it tears my heart. Daniel, who grew up in rural North Dakota, is stunned to see the decay.

In 1970, a year after I was born, Flint had a population of nearly 200,000. General Motors employed 80,000 in plants throughout the city. This year, the population is just under 100,000, and about 4,000 people work for GM. Factories that once produced cars and spark plugs have been torn down, leaving just concrete slabs.

The decline of the auto industry didn't happen overnight. It happened over three decades, a layoff here and a layoff there. City leaders and citizens knew this was happening, but no substantial change took place. There was no planning for the day when GM wouldn't be around. I don't say this to blame people. But my fellow Flintoids and I were whistling past the graveyard, ignoring the warning signs, because we didn't know how to prepare for the demise of our only industry.

As a kid, I never did like the parable of the foolish virgins. I thought the wise virgins were selfish for not sharing. I understand the story better now, but there is still a residual feeling that the foolish virgins were framed.

Matthew 25 is filled with stories about the end of time and about being prepared for that great day. It begins with this tale of ten virgins going to a wedding—half of whom didn't plan ahead. Just like my hometown wasn't prepared for the massive loss of its main employer, the foolish virgins didn't prepare for the late arrival of the groom. They weren't present.

Jesus asks his listeners whether, at the end of time, they will be ready to meet their maker. He doesn't say when he will return. So we are called to be present in the here and now, to

live as if Jesus' return will happen today. The wise virgins are present, aware of the time they live in. We are called to live as if the Lord's day is happening now—to tend to the sick, help the poor, and make disciples. We are to be like the wise virgins, carrying enough oil to wait for the groom's arrival.

We are called, that is, to be ready now, not just ready for that great day in the future. God can arrive in many ways in the here and now, in how we care for the stranger and for one another. We can easily miss God's arrival in our daily lives, and many of us have. We have been both the wise virgins and the foolish ones at one time or another.

Back in the 1950s in Minneapolis, there was an African-American Methodist congregation, Border Methodist, that was losing its home to urban renewal. A few blocks to the south was Hennepin Avenue Methodist, the big church in town, made up largely of people of European ancestry. (Disclosure: I work part-time for Hennepin.) Hennepin worked to formally invite the members of Border to become members of Hennepin. In the 1950s, the act of a white church reaching out to a primarily black church was an oddity. This simple act of welcoming was a big deal, with news media like

## We are called to live as if the Lord's day is happening now.

the *New York Times* talking about this big step forward in civil rights.

At that moment, Hennepin's people were just being present. They were the virgins who had the extra oil, ready for God to show up not just at the end of time but at that particular time, nearly 60 years ago.

Are we ready? As the old spiritual goes, are our lamps "trimmed and burning"? The wise virgins were ready. So was Hennepin Avenue Methodist. Are we ready to meet Jesus in the future at the end of time and also right now—especially when Jesus comes in the form of a poor single mother, a young gay man who feels like an outcast, or an executive who has everything and still feels empty?

My hometown is trying to reinvent itself. Downtown Flint is now a bustling place, especially since the local farmer's market moved in. They can't ignore the present anymore. May we learn to be ready for God showing up in the here and now.

*The author is Dennis Sanders, who is pastor of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of St. Paul in Mahtomedi, Minnesota.*

# What is marriage now?

by Gerald W. Schlabach

**AMID ENDLESS DEBATES** concerning same-sex relationships and same-sex marriage, one biblical passage is often curiously absent. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul reflects on the merits of married and single life. If unmarried persons struggle with sexual self-control, he says, they should marry, “for it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion.”

The King James Version translates Paul’s sentiment more bluntly: “It is better to marry than to burn.”

Wide embarrassment on all sides no doubt accounts for neglect of this passage—but also makes it an unexpected resource. If no side owns it, the passage may offer a rare place to meet for fresh discernment. If no one likes the passage, its very neglect might offer an unexpected way out of our impasse.

That impasse is one I have lived. As a Catholic moral theologian I’ve struggled for more than two decades with the pain of those with same-sex attractions and relationships who face rejection from families and churches that claim to offer the deepest love. To experience such a gap is to sense a betrayal—a pain that, by cutting into one’s very identity, may wound more than do bullying and violence.

Yet the pain of others is quite real too. Unjustly dismissed as homophobic, some are simply reeling from the sexualization of culture and the corrosion of stable family relationships. They may unfairly grab on to homosexuality as the ultimate sign of a breaching of those cultural assumptions and of a natural order upon which they’ve built their lives. But they have legitimate concerns and valid questions.

I also write as the husband of a Mennonite pastor of a welcoming congregation who is prepared to officiate same-sex weddings. My wife and I have taken our churches’ pain, struggles, and arguments deep into our marriage over the years. Because she’s a pastor who is sensitive to local needs, she focuses on different points than I do as an ethicist seeking to reconcile an array of positions and concerns.

However improbably, I have found Paul’s approach in 1 Corinthians 7 offers a path out of our impasse and toward broader churchwide consensus concerning marriage. Extending the blessings of marriage to same-sex couples by recognizing their lifelong unions fully as marriage could allow the church to speak all the more clearly to what deeply and rightly concerns those who seek to uphold the sanctity of marriage. But the opportunity opened here is

also a responsibility—to renew Christian teaching concerning why God’s intention is that full sexual intimacy belong solely to marriage.

**I**n a rare remark within his letters, Paul takes pains to clarify that his counsel in 1 Corinthians 7 may carry no special authority from the Lord and may only reflect the wisdom he has gathered from personal and pastoral experience. A turn to personal experience is striking coming from Paul, an apostle who’s had a direct revelatory encounter with the risen Lord.

## Paul is not talking just about quenching lust.

Yet here he’s ready both to draw upon the complexities of messy human experience and to forthrightly recommend a compromise or concession.

Heterosexual marriage was actually that compromise. Instead of the indispensable biblical value that some contemporary churches project marriage to be, marriage was a practical solution for Paul and apparently a “second best.” Far more urgent were the kingdom values and tasks that pressed upon the community in light of Jesus’ expected return. At least in 1 Corinthians, the main purpose of marriage was not even the protection and care of children or the benefit that accrues to society through such care. Marriage was the better choice for Christians if and when they needed to deal with otherwise uncontrolled sexual desire.

No wonder the Pauline remark is hardly a go-to text in current debates over same-sex marriage: impassioned advocates as well as fierce resisters find it embarrassing. Churches that once held the vocation of celibate religious life to be above married life (and only reluctantly called marriage a vocation) now celebrate both ways of life as callings equal in status. So-called conservatives and so-called liberals agree on this much: both are glad that today’s church has a more exalted view of marriage than Paul did.

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In the fifth century of Christianity, Augustine defined three chief “goods of marriage”: permanence, faithfulness, and fruitfulness (*sacramenti, fidei, proli*s). When ancient church leaders associated faithfulness mainly with the Pauline solution for lust, they were citing only one of three goods or purposes. Likewise, Christian interpreters today may continue to see procreation and child rearing as the prototypical expression of fruitfulness, but not as the only one. Every Christian marriage should face outward in hospitality and service to others.

Together with permanence, therefore, faithfulness has come to stand for all the ways that couples bind their lives together. Spouses do not practice faithfulness only by giving their bodies exclusively to one another in sexual intimacy, but by together changing dirty diapers and washing dirty dishes, by promising long and tiring care amid illness and aging, by offering small favors on very ordinary days.

In comparison, Paul’s stated reason for marriage seems crass and primal. If controlling sexual desire is the only reason someone marries, then that desire may invite unhealthy or abusive sexual practices. If one partner sees the other primarily as a tool for satisfying lust, he or she is treating the other more as an object than as one truly beloved. Yet although marriage must be much more than this, the primal creaturely realities of marriage do not lose their relevance or foundational function.

Social conservatives are right to say that marriage and family are building blocks of society. Family is the place where children are cared for, learn care for others, and thus learn discipline and civility. But first good parents and would-be parents aid and care for one another as spouses.

If family is foundational for society, then marriage is the foundation for family. It is the place where spouses cement the habits, disciplines, and virtues of mutual care that we hope they began learning in their families of origin. Amid the daily ordinary, they forge a life together “for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, ’til death do us part.”

Even when sexual desire is an overwhelming motivation

and temporarily disproportionate reason for a couple to wed, marriage channels that energy and desire for closeness into the sealing of a thousand other bonds of mutual regard and mutual support. This is the *unitive* dimension of marriage. Then, building on this foundation, a marriage becomes generative or fruitful. As spouses support one another they contribute to a still larger community, prototypically through procreation and child rearing but also in their respective and shared vocations on behalf of the common good beyond themselves.

It is in this sense that the Pauline remark turns out not to be just about quenching lust after all. “To burn” may stand for all the ways that we human beings, left to ourselves, live only for ourselves, our own pleasures, and our own survival. By contrast, “to marry” may signal the way that all of us (even those who do so in a vocation of lifelong celibacy) learn to bend our desires away from ourselves, become vulnerable to the desires of others, and bend toward the service of others.

This is a good thing for all.

**F**ar from being only an embarrassing textual artifact, Paul’s remark encodes the entire civilizational story of marriage. Anthropologists and paleontologists have various theories of how marriage began—whether roving men needed the resources of women more or whether childbearing women needed the protection of men more, how sexual exchange sealed and contributed to other exchanges of scarce resources or kinship, and so on. Whatever the case, one can hardly imagine civilization beginning to form at all without the fusion and coordination of cultures of women and men. Even today major social problems result when entire populations, especially of men, live lives that are unattached, except perhaps through the male camaraderie of gangs and soldiering.

This may be the truth behind the claim that men require the domesticating influence of women. To be sure, that claim has too often served to keep women in domestic roles, limit them to certain kinds of jobs, or cut them off from education and

self-development. And even where the claim seems to have evidence behind it, cultural patterns have varied so much through history and across cultures that it is hard to know what the precise take-home lesson should be for any given household, much less any given society.

It's better to focus on the work that all spouses must do to grow in habits of mutual regard, mutual support, and a shared vocation of service to others. It is this work that in turn works on them. It is this ordinary work of ordinary life that makes it "better to marry than to burn," whatever one's culture, household division of labor, gender, or sexual orientation.

*New York Times* columnist David Brooks put this well in his 2003 column "The Power of Marriage." "If women really domesticated men, heterosexual marriage wouldn't be in crisis," said Brooks. "In truth, it's moral commitment, renewed every day through faithfulness, that 'domesticates' all people."

The real crisis of marriage in modern societies, argued Brooks, is a "culture of contingency." Having learned through millions of consumer decisions to hold up individual choice as the highest value, modern humans take consumeristic habits of mind into even the most intimate of human relationships. Youthful sexual experimentation and adult promiscuity are hardly new, but modern mores and media have transformed perennial temptations into cultural expectations. Even people who hope to marry for life will "shop around" first, trying on sexual partners before committing. And though they may approximate the institution of marriage through cohabitation, even stable relationships may retain the dimension of a "trial marriage."

Within this culture of contingency, as Brooks notes, many enter into marriage as "an easily canceled contract . . . Men and women are quicker to opt out of marriages, even marriages

that are not fatally flawed, when their 'needs' don't seem to be met at that moment."

Obviously a legal or even a sacramental wedding is not a guarantee of sustained and sustaining marital bonds. Heterosexual divorce rates make that all too clear. The culture of contingency can seep into and corrode marital bonds even in what seem to be the strongest of marriages.

"But," said Brooks, "marriage makes us better than we deserve to be." So those who care deeply about the sanctity of marriage should resist the culture of contingency both by removing obstacles to marriage *and* by insisting on the link between healthy loving sexual practice and marriage.

Brooks proposed that the conservative course is not to banish gay people from marriage. "We shouldn't just allow gay marriage," he wrote. "We should insist on gay marriage. We

## Marriage does not need to be redefined for gays.

should regard it as scandalous that two people could claim to love each other and not want to sanctify their love with marriage and fidelity."

In other words, some of the best reasons to support same-sex marriage turn out to be deeply conservative ones. This suggests how the Pauline remark might provide the church with a framework for proclaiming a message of good news for all sides. It offers good news for those who are deeply concerned that we continue to hallow the institution of marriage as the only appropriate place for intimate sexual union. And it offers good news for those who are deeply concerned that people of same-sex orientation be allowed equal opportunity to flourish as human beings—that the covenanted bonds of sexual intimacy play just as much of a role in their lives.

It's also good news that marriage need not be redefined for gays and lesbians. Marriage can and should remain a covenant and a forming of the one flesh of kinship, rather than a mere contract forming a mere partnership. Unfortunately, when advocates of same-sex marriage dismiss critics who insist that society needs a clear definition, they often default to a definition of marriage that is more impoverished than they intend it to be. As Brooks observed, they sometimes make gay marriage "sound like a really good employee benefits plan."

Marriage will indeed be subject to endless reinvention unless we recognize it as more than a contract. Instead we should recognize and insist that marriage is the communally sealed bond of lifelong intimate mutual care between two people that creates humanity's most basic unit of kinship, thus allowing human beings to build sustained networks of society.

Procreation will always be the prototypical sign of a widening kinship network. But as spouses in any healthy marriage know, including infertile ones, kinship is already being formed in tender, other-directed sexual pleasuring. Such pleasure bonds a couple by promising and rewarding all the other ways of being together in mutual care and service through days,

## The Feast of All Souls

November 2

The dead visited this morning: sisters, parents, aunts and uncles, old professors and friends—faces so vivid they again appeared in my room through memory's lens.

Did families stage a yard sale later in the Catholic cemetery on Common, a table set up in the center, orange water cooler in view? But I am mistaken.

It's All Souls Day when people assemble to clean the crumbling graves and to honor their dead, whose remnant bones sometimes tumble from ancient crypts, although their souls have soared

like skeins of starlings, whose sudden flight in sunlight dyes wings a shimmer of white.

Stella Nesanovich

years, and decades. The tragedy of abusive sex is that it uses this capacity only to *take* pleasure. And the tragedy of non-covenanted sex is that it forms this deep bond only to tear it apart. Even committed cohabitation leaves an asterisk of contingency on bonds of kinship, either by attempting commitment individualistically and without communal accountability, or by openly treating the relationship as a trial.

All of this, both the tragic and the good, can be said of both heterosexual and same-sex sexuality and marriage. And saying it in a single account with a single standard is one of the best things the church can do to strengthen all marriages.

**Y**es, Paul's remark requires both advocates and opponents of same-sex marriage to do some uncomfortable rethinking. Thankfully, Paul has given us a biblical warrant for letting experience stretch us, for recognizing that exceptions may sometimes be legitimate, and for returning our focus to what is the good and the better.

Obviously this will stretch those who have been certain that the Bible and natural law unambiguously rule out sex and marriage except between a man and a woman. They will have to take seriously the argument that the Bible never considered the prospect of monogamous covenanted same-sex relationships. They will have to accept a biblical hermeneutic that gives greater weight to God's invitation to people whom even the apostles considered unclean and less weight to contested texts

that seem to legitimate purity codes. They'll have to open themselves to the possibility that modern science, fresh historical study, and cultural studies require a more complex understanding of what our nature has been all along.

Yet they can welcome this stretching and this framework because it answers their deepest and most legitimate concerns. Our culture often seems to take promiscuity for granted. Although social conservatives may not be the only ones who worry about the hook-up culture of recreational sex, the wider culture expects people to practice a kind of slow-motion promiscuity. Adultery is still considered wrong for married couples, and couples that are dating or "together" should have sex only with each other, but partners are expected to check out sexual compatibility as part of a tentative, exploratory commitment. A succession of sexual partners is thus seen as normal, as long as each relationship is at least vaguely "committed."

This culture of contingency troubles many of us, and some react negatively to homosexuality or same-sex sexual activity because it seems to them the final breakdown of boundaries and propriety. Gays and lesbians rightly object to the implication that they are especially promiscuous. But at least within debates over same-sex marriage, they lose nothing by stipulating the concern, if only for argument's sake. After all, any confirmation of a greater tendency toward promiscuity among certain demographics, probably male, would provide more support for same-sex marriage!

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# BOOKS for CHURCH LEADERS



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An area of consensus begins to emerge: a chief reason for our uncertainty about gay promiscuity is that for a long time gays and lesbians had no culturally recognized or legally protected paths by which to develop healthy sexual relationships. Within the church they could not even embrace a celibate vocation with a fully human yes because no other healthy and recognized option was available to them. If they've been left to "burn," as Paul said, it's because they could not marry.

Extending the blessing of marriage to same-sex couples will in fact counter the culture of contingency and promiscuity among heterosexuals as well as gays and lesbians. The blessing to all may encourage marriage among heterosexuals—my wife and I have both heard straight young people say that they hesitate or even refuse to marry until marriage is available to their gay and lesbian friends. And while a complex array of social and economic factors contributes to increased rates of cohabitation, withholding the blessing of marriage to gays and lesbians hardly helps. If cohabitation is the only way for them to live in monogamous covenanted relationships, then it becomes a more prominent, increasingly normalized model of relative faithfulness. If Christians are going to continue to insist that public accountability within communal support systems is an essential condition for greater and more permanent faithfulness, then weddings should be open to all.

**M**eanwhile, those who've advocated for same-sex marriage chiefly in the language of rights and freedoms will also be stretched. They will have to acknowledge that their opponents have rightly pressed for a clear definition of marriage and provide much better answers. After all, one cannot really recognize a right to something without knowing what it is.

Furthermore, it stretches many in our culture to recognize that the fullness of human freedom is to be found in capacity and not simply in autonomy. In other words, freedom requires more than mere license or freedom *from* restriction. It also requires the skills, habits, and virtues to live well and richly—freedom *for*. In turn, the freedom of capacity requires a formation that includes discipline. (Think here of all that's required to develop the freedom to play virtuoso piano or excel as an athlete.) Advocates of same-sex marriage should reaffirm that the discipline of chastity, in preparation for the discipline of marital fidelity, is actually freeing.

Yet they too can welcome this stretching and this framework because it answers their deepest and most legitimate concerns—it opens up equal access to marriage and acknowledges the need to correct for limited understandings of the nature of same-sex orientation. It acknowledges the painful injustices. Then it welcomes the opportunity for all to thrive, not as gay or straight, "queer" or "normal," but as human beings who need to find life-giving forms of personal intimacy.

The stretching that's required is also an opportunity. Gays and lesbians might say something like this: "Part of the injustice of the past is that we have not had good options for chaste courtship, socially and ecclesiastically supported marriage, or authentically chosen celibacy. Together these would have given us the opportunities that straight people have had to explore their sexual identities without extra pressure for sexual experimentation outside of marriage. Escaping this tragic injustice allows us to reaffirm that God intends active sexuality to take place uniquely within marriage. Discarding excuses for refusing to bless same-sex relationships goes hand-in-hand with discarding excuses for sex outside of marriage, straight or gay."

In this view, marriage is not simply an oppressive institution to be dismissed as heterosexist. As a heterosexual I recognize that I cannot help but write this from outside the direct experience of gays and lesbians. But surely this is implicit in the entire social and legal movement for recognition of same-sex marriage. All sides will be helped if all sides can affirm this.

**I**f this proposed framework for a churchwide consensus feels like a grand compromise, that in itself is not a bad thing. Uncomfortable concessions can be a sign of having listened deeply to one another. And anything that allows Christians to engage society together through a positive and reconciled witness rather than defensive postures will be welcome.

But I believe this is much more than a compromise. It brings us together in the biblical witness and wisdom of Paul himself. It allows the church to make its teaching on the nature and sanctity of marriage clearer. And it allows us to turn our energies to working on the real challenges to marriage in our age.

It would be foolish to claim that this framework alone will resolve everything. Easy access to pornography, the hook-up culture, and media portrayals of recreational sex as the norm are difficult to counter. The social expectations that are producing ever more exorbitant wedding events do not get the attention they deserve.

The widening practice of cohabitation is vexing in another way. Young people hesitating to vow themselves to one another permanently are perpetuating the culture of contingency even though they have often been its victims—for example, as children of divorce. And even if the contingency of cohabitation makes lasting relationships somewhat less likely, it does approximate and thus honor marriage in some ways.

So the church and its leaders need great pastoral wisdom to do two things simultaneously:

- Walk back from the culture of contingency by explaining and insisting in fresh ways that God intends for active sexuality to belong uniquely to marriage.
- Work compassionately with those who have embraced the relative fidelity of cohabitation, even if they have not yet moved to embrace a covenant of marriage or a vocation of celibacy.

If we aim for these two goals, Christians will be better able to speak clearly and work energetically because together we'll affirm that marriage is good—for everyone.

# Winning souls to the polls

by Jesse James DeConto

**THIS IS CALLED** a voting altar call!” said William Barber, a leader in the Moral Mondays movement in North Carolina, which since 2013 has been challenging new legislation coming out of the Republican-controlled statehouse. Barber stood on a temporary stage in the middle of CCB Plaza in Durham, surrounded by hundreds on a Monday in late July.

Barber was focused on the one political issue that undergirds all others: the right to vote. Since last summer, when the U.S. Supreme Court in *Shelby County v. Holder* gave state governments more power to shape election laws without federal oversight, legislators from Virginia to Arizona have been erecting new barriers to voting. This is part of a broader trend, as even states like Ohio and Kansas that weren’t covered under the litigated Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 have been changing election procedures, such as requiring photo IDs at voting precincts or cutting early-voting schedules. The new rules in North Carolina are among the most restrictive. The March to the Polls rally in Durham was just one of many efforts to rally blacks and other minorities to the voting booths in the face of new rules that would keep them out.

“We come to Durham, and we’re going all over this state to say to [state house speaker Thom] Tillis, to say to [state senate president pro tem Phil] Berger, to say to [Governor Pat] McCrory, when we fight in North Carolina, this is not merely a political fight, this is the fight of history, this is the fight of our time, this is a blood fight,” said Barber, head of the North Carolina chapter of the NAACP. “We need to make sure they cannot figure out this election because they ain’t never seen folk organized like they will see us organized in a so-called off-year.”

In 2010, when registered black voters and registered white, female voters did not turn out in the same numbers as they do during a presidential race, Republicans seized both chambers in the state’s general assembly. In 2012, Pat McCrory was elected Republican governor. The Republican majority has since passed a series of measures on education, the environment, and social programs that sparked the Moral Mondays protests.

After the *Shelby* decision, the legislature passed a set of voting laws that:

- Reduces the early-voting period from 17 days to ten days, which also eliminates one or two days of Sunday voting
- Bans same-day registration during the early-voting period, meaning that voters have to be registered ahead of time

- Disallows ballots that are cast in the right county but at the wrong precinct (previously these ballots had gone through a validation process and were counted as provisional ballots)
- Cuts pre-registration for 16- and 17-year-olds
- Empowers “election-integrity” groups to challenge more ballots
- Requires (beginning in 2016) a photo ID in order to vote

Local boards of elections have also constrained turnouts by moving precincts off college campuses and out of minority neighborhoods and urban areas.

In a lawsuit against the state government, voting rights groups have argued that early voting and same-day regis-

## North Carolina has enacted some of the nation’s most restrictive voting laws.

tion make voting easier for low-income citizens and working parents who might not be able to take time off work or get childcare in order to vote on election day. Black voters have been about 35 percent more likely to vote early and use same-day registration as whites, and twice as likely to cast out-of-precinct provisional ballots, according to NC Policy Watch.

In October, the plaintiffs were able to win an injunction from the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals delaying the elimination of same-day registration and out-of-precinct provisional ballots until the full suit can be resolved sometime in 2015. But the election law changes that remain in effect for the November 4 election will disproportionately affect young adults, women, and minorities.

Republican legislators “cherry-picked all the procedures that African Americans and youth were using, and those are the ones they went after,” said Bob Hall, executive director at Democracy North Carolina, a nonpartisan voter rights group.

During the 2012 election, women in North Carolina used early voting more than men by nearly 12 percentage points. African-

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*Jesse James DeConto is a writer, musician, and worship pastor in Durham, North Carolina. He is author of the spiritual memoir This Littler Light: Some Thoughts on NOT Changing the World.*



William Barber (Photo by Josh Rushing [Creative Commons])

American voters that year constituted less than a quarter of registered voters but more than a third of those who voted in the first week of early voting and almost half of those who voted on the first Sunday—opportunities that have been eliminated.

“Florida similarly eliminated a week of early voting before the 2012 election, and we all know how that turned out,” said Dale Ho, director of the ACLU’s Voting Rights Project. “Voters in Florida stood in line for hours, with some having to wait until after the president’s acceptance speech to finally vote, and hundreds of thousands gave up in frustration. Those burdens fell disproportionately on African American voters in Florida, and the same thing will happen in North Carolina,” said Ho. “We should be making it easier for people to vote, not harder.”

Of all the legal changes, losing same-day registration would be the most harmful to voters if the courts don’t permanently reverse it, according to Hall.

“That’s tens of thousands of people,” he said. “Say [someone has] moved from one county to another, or they just moved from another state, and they get tuned into the campaign after the 25-day [registration] threshold. Now, they’re going to be out of luck.”

Hall said not counting out-of-precinct ballots would also discourage voters, who might show up at a voting station near their workplace or their children’s school, only to be turned away.

“There’s a general atmosphere that has a chilling effect, rather than inviting. It’s just an intimidating message. It makes voting feel like a complicated process. They’re going to censor themselves. They’re going to pull away, and that’s sad—but that’s exactly what it’s designed to do.”

The importance of same-day registration and counting out-of-precinct ballots was evident in the September primary. Democracy NC reported that elections boards rejected 450 provisional ballots because they were cast in the wrong precinct or because the voter was unregistered—and almost 40

percent of those were from black voters and nearly 60 percent were from Democrats.

In acting to protect those opportunities for the November election, Fourth Circuit judge James Wynn said that under the Voting Rights Act “even one disenfranchised voter” denied the right to vote on account of race “is too many.”

**N**orth Carolina’s election this year has national implications as Republicans aim to seize control of the U.S. Senate for the first time since 2007. Many observers see Democratic senator Kay Hagan, who rode Obama’s coattails to victory in 2008, as vulnerable to a challenge from Tillis, who pushed the legislature to pass the new voting laws.

Nearly everyone agrees that, however organized, voting rights groups are fighting for incremental change this year.

“This year’s been pretty rough on people in general, particularly black and brown and poor folks,” said Nicole Campbell, a young voter-drive organizer with the state NAACP. “We have to get our communities that are most deeply affected to wake up. The goal is not so much flipping the majority. The goal is to get people to wake up. There’s something to be said for folks reclaiming the power of their voice, the power of engagement.”

On the ground, community organizers are hoping the new laws will motivate new voters who will counteract the laws’ intended effects. Democracy NC is running a *Jumpstart the Vote* campaign, including *Souls to the Polls*, a program for recruiting grassroots organizers in religious congregations.

*Souls to the Polls* has a long tradition, particularly in African-American churches, but the loss of at least one ballot-box Sunday means fewer congregants will go en masse to election sites after worship. Rallying voters requires a more sustained effort this year. Hall said that as of early August, *Jumpstart the Vote* had attracted 1,200 volunteers, on par with involvement in a presidential election year.

"We are seeing more people wanting to volunteer, wanting to be involved, because of the hostility of the General Assembly and the message of hope from the Moral Mondays movement," said Hall. "People felt like North Carolina was a moderate if not progressive state in the South, and now it feels like it's turned into a Mississippi nightmare, and people are angry."

Hall's field organizers are pushing people to vote early to make sure their votes are counted. Early-voting sites are open to anybody in each county, and voting before November 4 would also give voters time to discover and potentially fix problems with their registrations. "If you wait until election day, it's too late," said Hall.

In tandem with Hall's group, the NAACP is conducting a Moral Freedom Summer campaign, led by organizers like Campbell, a radio producer and 2012 graduate of UNC-Chapel Hill. The state NAACP aims to recruit at least 20 community organizers in at least 50 of the state's 100 counties to register five new voters a week for ten weeks leading up to the November election. That would be at least 50,000 new voters.

In her first three months of work this summer, Campbell's team was able to register more than 400 new voters in Durham County.

Barber has infused the campaign with theological language. "The Bible says the power of life is in the blood," he said, recounting the story of two black women murdered in Mississippi in 1966 after testifying at a hearing concerning offi-

cials who were violating the Voting Rights Act, passed the year prior.

"Nobody gave us our right to vote," Barber said. "Somebody died for our right to vote. It was the blood of the martyrs that filled the pen of history with the ink that would be used by Lyndon Baines Johnson to sign the Voting Rights Act. It was the blood that shamed a nation and forced people to do the justice they said they could not do. . . . How dare you trample on the graves of our mothers and our fathers! How dare you wipe your feet through the blood of the slaughtered! Just because hands that once picked cotton can now join hands with other folk and pick presidents and pick governors and pick legislators, you thought you were in a fight? You ain't seen nothing yet!"

**A**t the March to the Polls rally in Durham, Duke Divinity student Candice Benbow told of the Forsyth County Board of Elections' decision to shut down an early-voting site in Winston-Salem's historically black Southside neighborhood where she grew up. She told of her grandmother, who raised six children, 15 grandchildren, and four great grandchildren in a section of Southside called Broadbay Heights.

"My grandmother said, 'They think we're stupid. They think we don't see what they're trying to do. They want to discourage us. We're not backing down. We fought these devils before, and we won.' Something is wrong when I'm fighting the same devils that my grandmother fought," Benbow said.

She said her generation has to "beat them at their own game," just like her grandmother's did. "They mobilized their churches and their sewing circles and their neighborhoods," she said. "If somebody needed a ride to register to vote or a ride to go to the polls, they took them.

"When I'm 79 years old, I don't want my granddaughter fighting the same devils that I did," Benbow said. "Young people, it's time to stand up like our grandparents did. Bring your neighbor to vote. Bring your roommate to vote. Form a sewing circle, even if you don't sew, and bring them too! We have the power to turn this thing around and make North Carolina great again!"

At his altar call in Durham, Barber asked for 40 new voter drive volunteers, not just 20.

"Turn around and face the people," Barber urged the new organizers as they assembled in front of the stage. "That's one, that's two . . . 17, 18, 19. I need 20 more from Durham! 12 more from Durham! All right!"

Once the 40 had assembled, Barber called for Campbell to get to work. "Go right down there, baby," Barber urged her. "Get your folk! Don't you let 'em go anywhere. You got an army right now!" **CC**

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# The road to Heller

by Emily Westbrook

**THE 2012 SHOOTINGS** at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, in which Adam Lanza used a semiautomatic rifle to kill 26 people, including 20 children, instantly reignited a debate over gun control. Within hours, an online petition was generated through the White House's We the People platform demanding that the Obama administration "immediately address the issue of gun control through the introduction of legislation in Congress."

At the same time, gun sales spiked across the country. The National Rifle Association held a press conference a week after the incident at which its executive vice president, Wayne LaPierre, declared that "the only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun," and he urged Congress to direct its attention away from gun control laws and toward putting armed police officers into every school. "Politicians," LaPierre insisted, "have no business and no authority denying us the right, the ability, and the moral imperative to protect ourselves and our loved ones from harm." He did not invoke the Second Amendment as the source of this "right," but he didn't have to. The Second Amendment and its reference to the "right to bear arms" have, through the efforts of the NRA, become intimately associated with opposition to gun regulations.

In the midst of this debate, Michael Waldman, president of the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University's School of Law, has closely examined the historical context in which the Constitution and the Bill of Rights were drafted and ratified. He convincingly argues that the Second Amendment does not address or protect an individual right to own guns. Its purpose, instead, was to preserve state militias and assuage public concern that the newly established federal government would disarm them. In that era, the citizen-soldier stood as a powerful symbol of state sovereignty, and the survival of the militia system in the new government was viewed by many as an essential safeguard against oppression of the states by a federal standing army.

In practice, however, militia were often poorly trained, disorganized, and unreliable. The militia system faded into irrelevancy shortly after the passage of the Bill of Rights. (The militia ideal has to a limited extent been refashioned into the National Guard.) The Second Amendment received little attention: gun control was left to the states, as it had always been. On the few occasions when the Second Amendment was invoked by the Supreme Court, it consistently held that it pro-

THE  
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Michael Waldman

## The Second Amendment: A Biography

By Michael Waldman  
Simon & Schuster, 272 pp., \$25.00

ected an individual right to keep and bear arms only within the context of militia service.

All that changed in 2008, when the Supreme Court announced, in *District of Columbia v. Heller*, that the Second Amendment protects the right of private citizens to keep handguns in their homes for self-protection. Waldman argues that this seemingly abrupt about-face in constitutional jurisprudence, overturning more than 200 years of settled

## Gun-rights proponents developed a new stream of legal scholarship.

precedent, was the result of "one of history's most effective, if misleading, campaigns for constitutional change," a movement led by the NRA and its political allies.

Waldman traces the "road to Heller" back to the radicalization of the NRA in the late 1970s. The organization's "lurch to the right" was part of a larger conservative backlash against progressive reforms of the 1960s. It was then that the NRA first began to invoke the Second Amendment in vigorously opposing gun restrictions. Once primarily devoted to hunting, sport shooting, and gun safety, the NRA became a soldier on the front lines of the culture wars. Its rhetoric increasingly centered on concepts of individual entitlement, freedom, and revolution. Indeed, it adopted the language of social reform movements while tapping into the public's growing wariness and resentment of big government.

The NRA relentlessly pursued a multiphased campaign which began with aggressive proliferation of legal scholarship on the Second Amendment, followed by the election of sympathetic lawmakers, and culminating in the appointment of conservative justices. When *Heller* was presented to the high court, victory "fell like a ripe apple" into the NRA's hands.

The legal scholarship developed by gun rights proponents,

Emily Westbrook is a lawyer in Beacon, New York.

which reached its apex in the 1990s, aimed to prove that the founders' intent was to grant an individual right to gun ownership that was not necessarily tied to military service. Waldman criticizes this work as mostly revisionist "law office history," often involving selective "plucking of facts or quotes out of time or out of context."

Waldman does not deny that an individual's right to own guns for self-protection (and for hunting and sport, for that matter) was recognized, cherished even, by the founders. He merely posits that this right of self-defense was not perceived to be threatened by the establishment of a central government

and thus was simply not addressed in the Constitution or the Bill of Rights.

Waldman's view is supported by Supreme Court justice John Paul Stevens, whose recent book *Six Amendments: How and Why We Should Change the Constitution* includes a proposal for rewriting the Second Amendment. "The notion that the states were concerned about possible infringement of that right [to self-defense] by the federal government," Stevens writes, "is really quite absurd." Nevertheless, the *Heller* majority adopted the view of history promoted by NRA-backed scholarship, declaring that the Second Amendment codified an ancient "natural right" of self-protection.

Justice Antonin Scalia, writing for the court, applied the "jurisprudence of original intention" (originalism for short) in analyzing the Second Amendment. Originalism posits that the only proper way to interpret the Constitution is to determine what the words of a given provision meant to its drafters and those living at the time of its adoption. Scalia's brand of originalism is particularly text-focused. In his opinion in *Heller*, he takes the reader through a microanalysis of the Second Amendment's 27 words: "A well regulated Militia being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms shall not be infringed."

Scalia makes short work of the first 13 words, dismissing them as a "prefatory clause" which cannot be given much weight. He allows that the purpose of passing the amendment, as announced by this prefatory clause, was to preserve the state militia but maintains that the amendment accomplishes this purpose by codifying a broader preexisting right.

He then proceeds with what Waldman describes as an "almost claustrophobic" examination of the words forming the operative clause of the amendment, relying heavily on 18th-century dictionaries and linguistic hairsplitting. Scalia concedes that *bear arms* was an idiom commonly understood to refer to serving as a soldier or waging war, but asserts that this idiomatic meaning applied only if the phrase was followed by the preposition *against*, which is missing in the amendment. He distinguishes between *the militia* as discussed in the main body of the Constitution and *a militia* as the phrase appears in the Second Amendment,

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claiming that the former refers to an organized state military, the latter to all able-bodied men. Scalia's interpretation prevents the announced military purpose of the amendment from acting as a limitation upon the right it confers, and he defines that right broadly as an individual right to possess arms for self-defense.

Justice Stevens sat on the Supreme Court when *Heller* was decided, and he authored a fervent dissent. He too applied a

## It may have been a mistake for Stevens to offer his own "originalist" interpretation.

form of originalist analysis to the case but focused more on the original intent of the framers in drafting the amendment than on contemporaries' understanding of its words. He examines the historical record and concludes that the plain objective of the founders was to uphold state sovereignty through the protection of state militia.

In *Six Amendments*, Stevens proposes to remedy the court's misreading in *Heller* by revising the language of the Second Amendment so that it states that "the right of the people to

keep and bear Arms when serving in the Militia shall not be infringed."

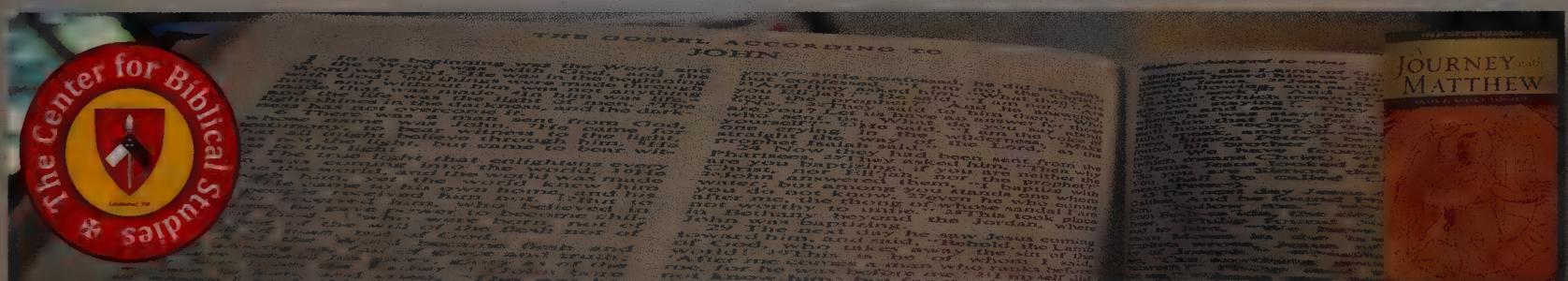
But the Constitution is not easily amended. Even to be considered, a proposal to amend the Constitution must be authorized either by a two-thirds vote of the House and Senate or via a convention called by two-thirds of the states. If a proposed amendment reaches that point, it still must be ratified by three-fourths of all state legislatures. Achieving that level of consensus seems impossible given the fierce intensity and emotion on both sides of the issue.

Waldman thinks Stevens makes a "better originalist argument" than does Scalia's majority opinion, but he questions what he surmises was a "strategic choice" on Stevens's part to engage in an originalist analysis in the first place. Stevens took an originalist route to reach a destination he could have arrived at through a more expansive analysis based upon judicial precedent, the balancing of interests, and recognition of present-day values and circumstances. And it's a mistake, Waldman thinks, to give warrant to originalist arguments.

Stevens own comments in a November 2013 speech at the University of Georgia seem to corroborate Waldman's theory. Stevens said that his resort to originalism in *Heller* was a means to an end, and he cautioned that "even the most qualified historians may interpret important events quite different-

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ly," concluding that originalism "cannot provide the correct answer to novel questions of constitutional law" involving contemporary concerns, such as the constitutionality of bans on same-sex marriage.

Waldman and Stevens agree that one of the most troubling consequences of the *Heller* decision is the move toward giving federal judges rather than democratically elected legislators

## Countering the NRA will require a comparable kind of legal and political effort.

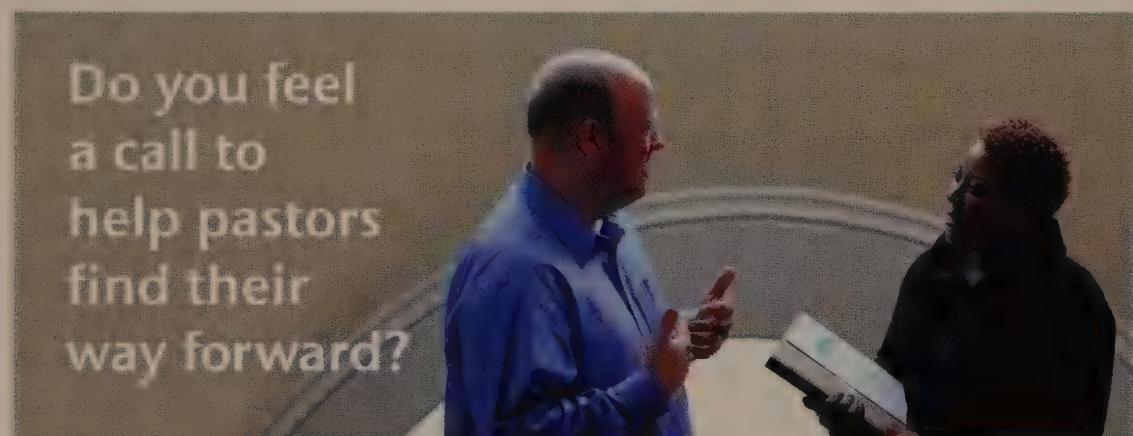
the power to make gun laws. They share the belief that local politicians are best equipped to assess the unique conditions of their constituencies and craft effective measures that do not unduly burden individual rights.

Waldman argues that those who would see meaningful gun laws passed and upheld must work to foster popular acceptance of the government's right to temper individual rights for the sake of the greater good. To do so, they should follow the NRA's example—stimulate public debate, develop their own line of scholarship, elect officials, stack the courts.

In the short term, the reformers have no choice but to play by the originalists' rules and make "better" originalist arguments, as Stevens has done. The initial focus should be upon enlarging the scope of permissible limitations on the right to bear arms enumerated in *Heller* (where the court explicitly acknowledged the constitutionality of prohibitions of gun sales to felons and mentally ill individuals and restrictions on the right to carry guns in "sensitive" locations like schools and government buildings) by uncovering analogous regulations in place during the era of the founders.

But the long game for gun-control advocates must entail showing that originalism is unworkable in theory and misused in practice. They must revive a theory of jurisprudence based on a "living Constitution," whereby judges emphasize the spirit of the Constitution over its text and apply its broad guiding principles to resolve modern questions. The most important lesson to be drawn from *Heller*, according to Waldman, is that how the courts interpret the Constitution is largely determined by public sentiment, by the will of "the people."

The Supreme Court found an individual right to own and carry guns within the words of the Second Amendment because enough people with enough passion, coordination, and influence wanted them to. "Each generation," Waldman says, "makes its own Second Amendment." And that, he believes, is as it should be.

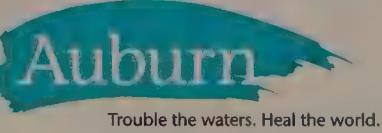


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## Lost in a sermon

**WHEN I WAS** a little girl I often accompanied my father on the weekends to small churches in eastern North Carolina. We would drive through the humid Sunday mornings with my father's sermon folded up between the pages of his hardback Bible. The sermon I loved the most was "Lost in the Mystery of God." I heard my father preach it several times and I never got tired of hearing it.

I can see the manuscript of that sermon: the title centered at the top in all capital letters, the typed text double-spaced and marked up with handwritten changes. But I can't remember the words themselves. Like many books I've read and loved, I can only remember the way that sermon made me feel. It made me feel as if the world was opening up around me, behind and before and on every side. It made me feel a kinship with devoted people of every faith. It made me feel that God was shining on the surface of things but also hidden in depths beyond my reach. I would love to read that sermon again. But unfortunately it is lost.

I've asked my parents about it. My mother thinks it was based on a psalm, and my father says the sermon wouldn't seem as wonderful to me if we still had a copy of it. It's a better sermon in your memory, he tells me, than it was in real life. Yes, my memory is faulty. I'm not always sure what day it is when I wake up in the morning. When I need to remember how old I am, I sometimes have to do the math.

But my body holds deep memories of "Lost in the Mystery of God." The title alone evokes the crunch of our tires on gravel parking lots, the elder smoking outside the church while he waits for us to arrive, my dad catching my eye when he steps into the pulpit, the backs of my legs sticking to the pew. In one church there was a young man who leaned forward to listen when my dad preached. He looked like he would drink every word like water if he could. Even as a little girl I could see that he was lost in the mystery of God.

I wanted to be lost like that. I still want to be lost like that.

St. Augustine wrote that it's more pleasurable to find something that's lost than to have it always in one's possession. He found the search for meanings hidden in scripture to be an inexhaustible pleasure because there were always more meanings to find.

But even St. Augustine felt frustrated that he could not remember every moment of his childhood. He studied babies to try to remember what he had been like as a baby; he interviewed his mother and his nurse. His childhood felt lost to him.

Augustine cultivated his life with God out of this sense of

something precious lost. His childhood wasn't really lost; it was lost in God, who remembers everything and in whom, as Augustine put it, nothing dies. If Augustine wanted to remember his childhood—to know himself—he would have to become lost in the mystery of God as well.

My father's lost sermon sometimes feels like the crucial missing piece of my childhood. I feel that if only I could read that sermon, my confusions would be clarified, my theology renewed. If I could read it word for word, I would understand better who I am.

But maybe what matters just as much as the words of the sermon is the crunch of the tires on the gravel, the elder walking toward us, the look my father gave me, and my body in the pew. The mystery of God permeated all of this. I think maybe what my father said in that sermon is that we can trust ourselves to that mystery, that it is OK to be lost.

**The words of that old sermon are lost, but I remember the way it made me feel.**

What can one do with a lost sermon but try to rewrite it? It won't come out the same as the original, but it didn't come out of the pulpit the same way each time either. Before preaching it a second or third time, my father made additions and deletions with a black ballpoint pen. Besides, as soon as a sermon leaves the page and encounters the congregation, it multiplies. One member of a congregation doesn't hear the same sermon that those around her hear. I wonder how that young man leaning forward in the pew with his chin in his hands rewrote "Lost in the Mystery of God" in his own life. When I imagine being wholly absorbed, wholly rapt, it is his face I see.

Sermons are ephemeral, made to be lost. Even when the manuscript is preserved, the sermon preached in a particular time and place is mostly gone. Making a sermon is something we do together, preachers and listeners alike. All of us become lost in a mystery in which all is remembered.

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*Stephanie Paulsell teaches the practice of ministry studies at Harvard Divinity School.*

## Praying strings

by Brian Doyle

**S**ome things generally known about the great Canadian singer-songwriter Bruce Cockburn: he's recorded more than 30 albums of his jazz-rock-folk-pop songs, he's a masterful guitar player (legend has it that when Eddie Van Halen was asked what it felt like to be the greatest guitarist in the world, his reply was "I don't know, ask Bruce Cockburn"), he is eloquent about his own brand of mystical Christianity, and he is a passionate, well-traveled activist, especially for environmental causes and against wars.

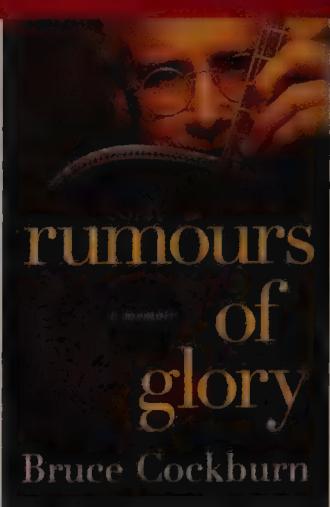
Some things hardly known about Cockburn and revealed in his articulate, thoughtful, sweeping autobiography: he is an avid gun collector and enjoys shooting competitions; he has all his life been so reserved and shy that he still is uncomfortable with crowds, with pretending to be a star, and with being "open enough to allow another human beyond the courtyard of my heart"; he was so hapless musically as a child that his teacher gave him sticks to bang together in lieu of wasting an instrument on him; and at least twice he has been visited by a presence he believes to have been Jesus: "invisible to the eye but as solid and obvious as any of the people in the room. . . . I felt bathed in the figure's energy. . . . The presence was real, male, and loving."

CENTURY readers may be most interested in Cockburn's complex spirituality. He is a devout Christian who detests religiosity and fundamentalism, is enraged by violence in God's name, and wanders into churches and chapels worldwide, hoping for peace and epiphany. Religion is no fixed abode for him (nor has he ever called one place home for long; he now lives in San Francisco). He is a wandering minstrel in the ancient tradition,

but one able to reach many millions of hearts and souls in the wild new world of modern technology.

Born in Ottawa in 1945 while his doctor father was serving with the Canadian army in Germany, Cockburn early on fell in love with the wilderness, with books and ideas, and, at age 13, with the battered guitar he found in his grandmother's attic: "my holy grail, the North Star and trail guide of my life." By 19 he was an apprentice in his trade, playing in a series of bands in Boston and Toronto, and diving into the New Testament, which he had never really read as a boy, having much preferred the juicy murder and rape in the Old. He made his first record at the age of 24 and was almost immediately a star in Canada, where he is today something of a national treasure.

By the time he recorded his fifth album (*Salt, Sun and Time*), he was open and eloquent in public and in his lyrics about being "a follower of Christ, . . . the presence, . . . a male entity more fraternal than paternal, radiant with calm power, a savior showing up to save me because I'd asked." With the album *In the Falling Dark*, a couple of records later, he began to speak bluntly about injustice and violence—the mistreatment of First Peoples in Canada, and then later of innocents in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Chile, Mozambique; the savagery and world-fouling scope of global capitalism; the epic sneer of the powerful at the endless screaming of the poor. In *Rumours of Glory* he says that he does not "write protest songs," but "personal lament, a cry of spiritual anguish that arose from feeling helpless in the face of endless assaults against people and the land. . . . I want to paint sonic pictures of what I encounter, feel, and think is true."



### Rumours of Glory: A Memoir

By Bruce Cockburn

HarperOne, 544 pp., \$28.99

The virtues of Cockburn's memoir are many. A great artist explains, more fully than he has in the 40-year chronicle of his lyrics, the tides and swirls of his fascinating life; a superb musician and songwriter delves a bit into how he works his craft, works with bandmates, is startled to compose by songs waiting to be written; an admirable and large-hearted man wields a sharp and eloquent tongue against greed and violence in religion, government, and business; a shy man learns, slowly, to open, and to love, and to come out from behind his façade.

I gobble up books by musicians, partly because I have not the slightest musical facility myself but know music to be the greatest of arts and am endlessly curious about how craft can become such a stunning and indeed holy thing. But most such books are flimsy ego trips or breezy ghostwritten mush. I have read only two beautifully written and piercing memoirs of this sort: Bob Dylan's *Chronicles: Volume 1*, and the great Australian rocker Paul Kelly's *How to Make Gravy*. Bruce Cockburn's book now joins that august company for me, and it has the additional and substantive quality of being uniquely thoughtful and eloquent about the author's Christian faith and how it informs his life and work.

Prayer is "a way of breathing and seeing," Cockburn writes:

Brian Doyle is the author of the essay collection *Children and Other Wild Animals* (Oregon State University Press).

of caring, a means of giving thanks and opening the mind and soul. . . . The Divine is there, no matter what the ism. . . . The Divine infiltrates our being and manifests, as it must, through the electrochemical processes in our brains. . . . God is the matrix in which we move, if we were only aware of it. The Divine touches us. We feel it as a species. We hunger for it. Sometimes we run from it. A distortion occurs when the gifts of God are translated by cultural gatekeepers, . . . seek to usurp divine power, make it their instrument, and crown themselves God's regents . . . brutal deeds done under the banner of God, fueled by men's ego, greed, and fear, . . . [but] from the first to the last we are all one in the gift of grace, and if we hold this gift dear we can be whole again.

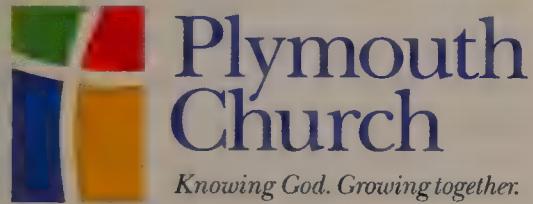
Or, as this master songwriter and composer once wrote in a song, "God waves a thought like you'd wave your hand / and the light goes on forever."

**Paul and the Faithfulness of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God**  
By N. T. Wright  
Fortress, 1,700 pp. in 2 vols.,  
\$89.00 paperback

**S**tudies of Paul in the past five decades reflect the tumult of the decades themselves. While Paul has ever been "protean," as Wayne Meeks memorably put it, in the past half-century he has been subject, like other cultural icons, to vast and violent swings in public opinion, to sweeping redefinition by critics in the academy, and to both redoubled allegiance and puzzled consternation in the church.

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*Reviewed by Alexandra Brown, who teaches Christian origins at Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia.*



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and sorrows of civilizations, especially Christian imperialism and the rise of Christian anti-Judaism, Paul has lately been at the center of debates about the supposed parting of the ways between Jews and Christians. These debates—which are urgent and showing no signs of resolution—focus on Paul for obvious reasons: he is our earliest witness to the Jesus movement, he was himself a devout Jew, and within a decade of the death of Jesus he articulated and disseminated widely what he called the gospel, or good news, of Jesus Christ while penning letters that are our earliest reflections on the meaning of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

This Paul, who had once set out to eradicate what he took to be an errant movement corrupting his own tradition, became the proclaimer of the "apocalypse of Jesus Christ." About this there is no debate. But what was Paul's relationship to his parent tradition once he was an apostle of Jesus Christ? Or more to the point of the present volumes, what did he think and preach about the relationship between Jesus Christ and the divine covenant with Israel? Did the Christian and Jewish ways part with Paul, or did he see his message as being in continuity with—indeed, in fulfillment of—the covenant of national vocation outlined in the Hebrew scriptures? In Paul's view, did Christians—Jews and gentiles alike—join Israel, replace Israel, or form a second elect beside Israel? Or has God created in Christ a people utterly new, radically distinct from any prior identity?

That these questions remain contro-

versial is clear in N. T. Wright's sprawling 1,700 pages of argument devoted to what he calls the "single great narrative" embraced by Paul. Wright, retired Anglican bishop of Durham, England, and currently research professor of New Testament and early Christianity at St. Andrews University, Scotland, finds the relevant pattern for his Jesus story outlined in Deuteronomy 27–30 (the "single flow of national narrative"), in combination with Daniel's prophecy of Israel's extended exile (Dan. 9).

In Wright's telling, Israel's exile ends neither in the restoration narrated by Ezra and Nehemiah nor in the Maccabean period, but in the advent of Jesus the Messiah, who brings about the true return of Israel and the covenant renewal spoken of in Deuteronomy 30. According to this narrative, says Wright, Paul invites first-century Jews and gentiles to understand themselves as the single family promised to Abraham, whose identity is properly understood as "Israel restored."

Wright's aim, simply put, is to show how Paul's story of the crucified and risen Messiah is at the same time the story of Israel rescued from extended exile. With this long-awaited eschatological event has come, for Wright's Paul, the restoration of the covenant, a redefinition of the elect, and consequently "restorative justice for the whole creation," now under way in "the coming world-wide victory of the Davidic king." Redefined around the Messiah Jesus, "the word *Israel* now denotes, however polemically, the entire faith-family of the Messiah"—that is, believing Jews and believing gentiles.

Spinning out this story to make it exegetically plausible requires an enormous, often ingenious effort on Wright's part, not to mention a good bit of rear-guard action throughout because this is controversial stuff. The first volume lays out Paul's "worldview," Wright's preferred term for the narrative function he ascribes to the collection of texts and circumstances (scripture and Greco-Roman culture) that he pieces together as controlling data for his story. In the second volume Wright demonstrates Paul's theological reworking of inherited covenantal themes in response to the new datum of the Messiah's arrival.

Monotheism, election, and eschatology emerge as "freshly revealed," "freshly reworked," and "freshly imagined," respectively, in an argument drawing heavily from Romans (especially chapters 3, 7, and 9–11), Galatians 3, and 1 Corinthians 15. Now the single people that is restored through Israel's Messiah becomes the long-awaited new temple (1 Cor. 3), the place where God's indwelling Shekinah is interchangeable with the Spirit of the Messiah. When Paul speaks of a "new creation," according to this view, he really means the new temple, where "all nations will come to worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," with "songs originally sung in the shrine in Jerusalem" arising from "hearts and mouths in every nation."

Early on Wright issues a refrain that echoes throughout the work: that the data constituting Paul's worldview amount to "a single great narrative, not a bunch of isolated incidents treated as types, analogies, examples, models or whatever." The opposite of this perspective, and the focus of severe critique from Wright, is "a non-narrative world where the only story is 'my story' on the one hand, or a narratival world where the main story is God's invasion of the cosmos without reference to covenant, on the other." The latter option, associated with Ernst Käsemann and J. Louis Martyn and here dubbed "neo-apocalyptic," is, for Wright, especially irksome. Its neglect of the "single-flow narrative" is in his view at best ahistorical—a term frequently connected in the book to the Enlightenment and to American imperialism—and at worst "anti-Jewish," a charge Wright makes explicit in the final chapter.

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Wright's single-flow story is nothing if not comprehensive. From election to eschatology, the entire story of Israel is reworked but retained in the good news of Jesus Christ. The failure of Israel to live up to the covenant is dealt with by the Messiah, who comes as the faithful Israelite to be crucified and resurrected, "to take upon himself and exhaust Israel's curse," to "fulfill the main plot." Thus is God faithful to his purpose: the rescue and restoration of covenant through Israel via Israel's Messiah.

The real question in Paul's mind, according to Wright, is: How will God save the world? And the answer is: through the covenant with Israel. To be righteous, as Wright reads the Pauline vocabulary of justification, is to be drawn up into God's faithfulness in this particular identity and there to participate in "a different kind of empire" on its way to "global sovereignty," where peacemaking, humility, and restorative justice will fulfill the "real intention of Torah." The "faithfulness of God," for Wright's Paul, is above all faithfulness to the Abrahamic covenant, which is at work in the ongoing flow of history as gentiles and Jews are incorporated as Messiah people and practice a new form of Torah observance in "Jewish identity, enlightened."

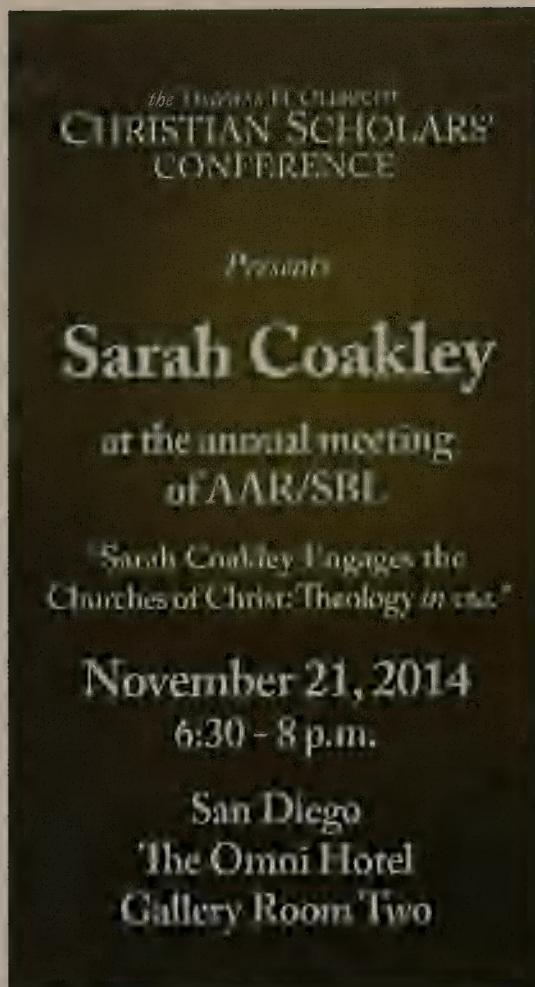
General readers of Paul may not immediately grasp what is controversial in Wright's single-narrative approach. We are accustomed, after all, to dividing the Bible into two covenants, or testaments, and to hearing these described in terms of promise and fulfillment. One might wonder why the "narrative breakers" (another name Wright gives the "neo-apocalyptic" scholars) wish to argue against the single-narrative approach. What is at stake and for whom?

From the perspective of some (myself included), the principal matter at stake is divine agency to elect freely, apart from the covenant. One need not deny the faithfulness of God to Israel to find divine agency extending beyond the covenant to incorporate non-Israel along with Israel in the new creation revealed in Jesus Christ. Indeed, at key moments Paul seems to read Israel's scripture in the direction of inclusion of the whole creation under divine mercy, not exclu-

sively through Israel, but in a universal gesture both including and transcending covenant identity. Although there is no question that Paul argues from scripture, many would agree with Francis Watson that "Paul shows himself to be a scriptural theologian, not a covenantal one." That is to say, he finds in scripture the signs of divine sovereignty even over covenant.

Whereas for Wright there is nothing apocalyptic that is not also covenantal, for others (myself included), Paul's apocalyptic vocabulary and worldview reflect shifts in perception about divine agency so powerful, so stunning that they cause him to testify that God creates ex nihilo, elects freely out of mercy and compassion, and creates a new world against every human convention of distinction and division. By this account, Paul's realization that God's faithfulness extends beyond the covenant with Israel to embrace the whole creation calls for the "reworked epistemology and cosmology" Wright accuses some of imposing on Paul at the expense of a thoroughgoing covenantal theology. From that point of view, Wright's own project appears to restrict the range of divine action and divine mercy, limiting it to a controlling and singular pattern of exile and restoration that effectively precludes divine agency apart from that pattern.

Wright's narrative demands a covenantal literalness, tied to a particular and narrowly selected set of covenant definitions, that stands opposed to Paul's pervasive language of new creation and his location of the scandal of the cross in its demonstration of divine agency to save apart from any prerequisite, Jewish or gentile. What Wright gains, if one accepts his argument, is a kind of ecclesiological and ethical coherence: new Israel—that is, the church—is empowered only by faithful acceptance of Jesus as Messiah to move now into the restoration of justice and peace that God promised Israel, and through Israel to the nations. What is lost is ample evidence—particularly when Paul speaks of the cross, the cosmos, and ways of knowing—that Paul's own transformation and the gospel he preached were both more radical and more far-reaching than Wright's "freshly reworked" covenant allows.



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## Sex and the Spirit: The Romance of Heaven and Earth

By Verlee A. Copeland  
and Dale B. Rosenberger

Pilgrim Press, 258 pp., \$20.00 paperback

**S**ex and the Altar" was the title our campus minister gave to a series on sexuality, hoping students might mistake it for a similar, more blasphemous phrase. (You have to be creative to get the attention of the 18–22 set.) It worked. The campus ministry house was full to bursting for those talks. In one session, two married clergy of differing orientations and races led a discussion about premarital sex. With passion and emotion, students discussed how to live a life in Christ while being in committed, sexually intimate relationships. After an hour or so, the clergy shared their beliefs, stating that they agreed with the position of our denomination: sex belongs only within the sanctity of marriage. Engaged discussion turned to silence, then

anger and fear. One young woman broke down in tears. The students had made themselves vulnerable, and their church had shut the door in their faces. Later the two ministers recanted and explained that they'd wanted to show this contrast.

Mainline churches have struggled to express a theology, ethics, or spirituality of sexuality. The liberal church I attended while growing up was silent on the issue despite being quite vocal on many others. In my twenties I turned a few times to evangelical websites, looking for any kind of theology of singleness and sexuality that I could relate to.

Verlee Copeland and Dale Rosenberger seek to fill that mainline gap, countering both "society's prevailing affirmation of sex as entertainment" and the "painful chasm between our spiritual and physical natures" in traditional church teaching.

The book's scope is broad. Written in ordinary, funny, earthy language, the chapters address sexual fantasy, gender difference, marriage, our sexual past,

masturbation, foreplay, machismo, infidelity, aging, celibacy, and the sexuality of Jesus. As married heterosexuals who state in the introduction that they "write from what they know," the authors chose not to address homosexuality.

*Sex and the Spirit* is biblical. Copeland and Rosenberger rely heavily on the Song of Solomon; creation; the complicated relationship between Abram, Sarai, and Hagar; the treatment of women as property in the Old Testament, the wedding at Cana, and the letters of Paul. I am sometimes frustrated that moderate and liberal Christians don't engage the Bible more in their theology or political positions on issues of sexuality. I am grateful that these two authors do.

This is the first time I've come across sex advice in a mainline church publication. At first I cringed—it's a bit like having your grandparents leave a can of whipped cream by your guest bed. On the other hand, it's about time. We should stop pretending that sexuality and spirituality aren't integrally connected. Out of loyalty

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to my husband, I won't share details, but we've used some of their advice with great success (chapter 13's discussion of "hot monogamy" was one of my favorites). Copeland and Rosenberger tell the story of an upstanding married couple in one of their churches who were arrested for engaging in sexual activity in a parked car and offer their example as one that should perhaps be admired. "Come on, you mainliners," they seem to say, "Let's have a little sexy Christian fun out there!"

Copeland and Rosenberger want readers to come away from their book believing that the words *sexy* and *Christian* belong together. Sexuality isn't a superficial pleasure; it's a deeply woven part of our God-given selves. It's an integral part of God's self, too. As Copeland says, "Our God is indeed a sexy God, who loved us into being and made us just this way." Sexuality is part of our spiritual lives as publicly Christian people: "All that happens in every relationship has wide implications for our relationship with God and especially for our place in serving to advance God's reign."

This book is primarily about married sexuality. There is a chapter about singleness and celibacy near the end of the book; however, I wonder if those two subjects deserve their own chapters since the two don't always come as a set. The authors do not devote a chapter to premarital sex, which my campus community so longed to comprehend in a faith context.

But Copeland and Rosenberger offer a lot of information that would be of interest to any Christian asking questions about spiritually healthy sexuality. I had never thought bodice-ripper romance novels to be on a par with male pornography, but Copeland and Rosenberger write that "both are remote, unattainable, and unsustainable in real life, . . . a self-involved, immature recoil to replace the demanding work of negotiating with another, . . . [where we] retreat and hide in our fantasies." On striving to strengthen marriage, they write: "Do we dare consider erotic imagination to be a spiritual discipline?" And I didn't realize that the infamous enemy of sexuality in Chris-

tianity, St. Augustine, had a worthy opponent in his contemporary Julian of Eclanum, who, according to the authors, spoke the mind of the Christian mainstream at that time. He taught that "God made bodies, . . . and God made nothing evil," and called sexual desire "vital fire" not (as Augustine called it) "diabolical excitement of the genitals."

The format of the book is sometimes clumsy. The conversational language can be so casual as to be distracting—for instance, when the authors refer to Henry Miller as "no Sunday school boy" or address the married male reader, saying that his wife "pledged [her] lovely bottom to your keeping." Sometimes more explanation is needed: to nonchalantly comment on "the woman who composed Song of Solomon" or to say that marriage was "God's idea" without further elaboration leaves questions unanswered. Finally, each chapter includes a "Male Counterpoint" or "Female Counterpoint" in which one of the authors responds to the other. I didn't find that these had much to

do with gender perspectives; the counterpoints mostly reiterated points already made in the chapter.

Copeland and Rosenberger have mature and worthy conversations about sexuality that, if shared, could enrich and illuminate a great many Christians' lives in crucial, life-giving ways. They're absolutely right: our incarnate, sexual selves are our Christian selves, and our sexual, incarnate self is our relational self, which relates to a spouse, to family, to friends, and to God. The more conversations we can have in our churches about sexuality and spirituality, the fuller the lives of the Christians in our churches will become. Jesus said, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

I hope church leaders will take the risk of reading and sharing this book and engaging in the awkward but life-giving conversations it will inspire. If nothing else, I've noticed in my own congregation that whenever sex is part of the topic for an adult education class, attendance doubles!

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Reviewed by Heidi Haverkamp, vicar of the Episcopal Church of St. Benedict in Bolingbrook, Illinois.

## Dancing on the Head of a Pen: The Practice of a Writing Life

By Robert Benson

WaterBrook, 192 pp., \$14.99

A pastor who has a story to tell about the renewal of her congregation wrote to me recently, "I know there is a book in me. I feel deeply called to write. I also feel totally overwhelmed when writing."

I know how she feels. When I wanted to write my story about spiritual direction, I too felt overwhelmed. I'd been reading Robert Benson's short memoirs for a few years and loving the way he tells stories from his own life to illumine the life of prayer. That was what I wanted to do. So I wrote on a Post-it note, "You Can Do This," stuck the note on Benson's memoir *Digging In*, and placed it on the desk where I write.

With the publication of *Dancing on the Head of a Pen*, Benson has become more than an inspiration; he is a guide to people like my pastor friend who don't know how to get from the blank page to a pile of pages called a book. "After some forty years and twenty books, I have learned I do not know a lot about a lot of things, but I do know how to write a book." Here he shares what he knows.

Benson begins with advice that reminds me of Abbot John Chapman's line about prayer: Pray as you can, not as you can't. Benson would say: Write as you can, not as you can't. He shares the shape of his writing life with humility, knowing what has worked for him and that if others try some of what he suggests, it might help them learn what will work for them.

He tells the whole story of writing a book, from generating an idea, to identifying an audience, to the perils of gabbing about a work in progress. I don't imagine many people will adopt his method. Who else would write a first draft longhand, type it into a computer, print it out, delete the computer file, paste the pages into a journal to revise, and then retype the whole thing? But his idiosyncrasies will help readers imagine their own possibilities.

More useful is Benson's encouragement to write every day. A writer who is suffering

from what Benson calls a "writer's pause" shouldn't go to the study thinking, "I have to write a book today!" That's impossible. It is only necessary to write some sentences on a page. What Douglas Steere said about praying, Benson would apply to writing: the only fatal failure is to stop.

Benson shatters the illusion that being a writer is anything but hard work, noting that "writing a book more closely resembles digging a ditch than participating in some transcendent creative experience." I suspect that his emphasis on fidelity to the mundane tasks of writing comes from the influence of Benedictine spirituality, as is so evident in his other books. The spiritual life is not about transcendent experience, either. It's about showing up for prayer, about faithfulness to the routines. As with prayer, so with writing.

The image I found most helpful is one I wish Benson had unpacked further. In his studio he has three hats—a beret, a baseball cap, and a fedora, each one symbolizing a different aspect of the writer's life. When he wears the beret, he's in the creative phase. When he wears the baseball cap, he's a ruthless editor. When he wears the fedora, he is attending to the business of publishing—drafting proposals, contacting agents, returning contracts. Keeping these three roles distinct is crucial, he says.

I wish he had said more about wearing the fedora. I know the book is about writing a book, not getting one published, but Benson says on the first page that "more and more the writer must not only make the art but deliver the audience as well." He's talking about what the publishing industry calls platform—a writer's ability to deliver an audience. And I'm curious how Benson pulls it off, because today fedora-wearing writers have more to do than he lets on. They have to blog, accumulate Facebook friends, and promote themselves online. I checked Benson's website, and it was last updated more than a year ago. So how does the fedora-wearing Benson deal with this newer aspect of the writer's life?

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Reviewed by L. Roger Owens, associate professor of leadership and ministry at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and author of *Abba, Give Me a Word: The Path of Spiritual Direction (Paraclete)*.

Benson suggests that writers should have a special shelf on which they keep the few books that teach and inspire them the most. I have one of those shelves, and on it *Dancing on the Head of a Pen* will take its place next to Annie Dillard's *The Writing Life*, Anne Lamott's *Bird by Bird*, and Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*. Not because it does what those other books do, but because in it Benson does so well what he sets out to do: pull back the curtain on one writer's craft and leave the reader saying, "I can do that."

## American Protestants and the Debate over the Vietnam War: Evil Was Loose in the World

By George Bogaski  
Lexington, 228 pp., \$90.00

How did America's Protestant leaders respond to the Vietnam War? Historian George Bogaski wisely adopts a comparative approach in his three-part analysis of denominational statements about what is arguably the most debated military conflict in recent American history. Focusing on both polity and theology, Bogaski produces an illuminating, if also unvarnished, story of prophets, priests, and bystanders. Mainline, evangelical, and black church leaders receive separate case studies.

The mainline Protestant narrative looks familiar at first glance: an antiwar denominational leadership is increasingly divorced from the silent majority in the pews. Bogaski does not challenge the thesis of mainline decline, which recent works have tweaked, but he does introduce some interesting wrinkles into it. His focus is not on William Sloane Coffin and other liberal stars, but instead on denominational officials and agencies whose march to the vanguard was gradual. Full-fledged opposition to American involvement in Vietnam came almost five years after the start of escalation. Even then, mainliners were mostly squeamish about supporting conscientious objection. Many thought at least notionally in terms of just war theology; they were not pacifists. However, the just war tradition proved too elastic to assist in "reaching moral judgment and resolution"

in the case of Vietnam. The "office of the prophet" was a more direct means to this end. But alas, Bogaski notes, it served to alienate the laity as much as educate it.

Bogaski offers an intriguing survey of conservative mainliners who chafed at liberal activism but were not prepared to depart for evangelical pastures. The general debate over the Vietnam War often played out as a dispute about the propriety of dissent itself. That issue, in turn, was a spillover from arguments over the civil rights movement. One's position on the advisability of civil rights protests usually foretold one's stance on antiwar marches. Mainline leaders' support for the cause of civil rights opened the door for assertive opposition to the war. Meanwhile, conservatives transferred their discomfort with civil rights demonstrations to antiwar activism. Looming over all of these issues was the question of whether denominations should engage politics at all. In these years before Jerry Falwell, the assumption was that church politics were liberal by default. That assumption was not accurate. Most theological conservatives in Bogaski's book appear to have been political conservatives, too.

Like political conservatives as a whole, evangelical conservatives were by no means the driving force behind what most Americans saw as Lyndon Johnson's war. Yet they helped to sustain what became Richard Nixon's war. "As far as the Vietnam War was concerned," writes Bogaski, "conservative evangelicals made their judgments with confidence." Bogaski brings special energy to this section, the longest of the three. His book benefits from a wealth of editorial cartoons that appeared in Baptist, Holiness, and Pentecostal publications. These and other sources are notable for their "affirmation of the normalcy of war." Bogaski stresses the glaring absence of concern over the bomb in conservative evangelical circles, while most other Protestants found little spiritual comfort in the prospect of apocalypse.

Bogaski goes to great lengths to be fair to conservative supporters of the Vietnam War, but he finds a lack of reflection that might surprise even the most cynical of readers. The familiar evangelical tendency to pit soul-saving against activism concealed an entrenched bias in favor of the war itself. As the war

became increasingly controversial within society at large, conservative evangelical support for it became more defensive, focusing especially on the need to protect missionaries and fellow Protestants in Vietnam. As late as 1972, some Baptists saw "revival coming to Vietnam"—a new spin on the logic of destroying the village in order to save it. Bogaski does touch on the nascent evangelical left, which reacted strongly against such glib assurances. Still, just as evangelical progressives drifted toward Anabaptist pacifism, the Assemblies of God shed the remaining vestiges of its historical peace stance.

In a brief but essential final chapter, Bogaski argues forcefully that African-American denominational leaders exhibited "a general silence" regarding the Vietnam War. Specifically, they kept their qualms off the record during the presidency of Johnson, who had championed and signed landmark civil rights legislation. Stronger criticism came when Nixon entered the White House, and even then it "was directed not so much at his foreign policy as at the threat he posed to Great Society domestic reforms."

Here we see another way in which the legacy of the civil rights movement informed responses to the Vietnam War. Johnson's support for civil rights trumped his policy of escalation. Martin Luther King Jr. famously broke from Johnson, of course, but the increasingly radical minister was hardly a mainstream cleric by the latter half of the 1960s. Bogaski seems taken aback by the degree of black Protestant resistance to King's attempt to bridge the civil rights and antiwar movements, yet he ably explains the political and sociological forces underlying it. Black involvement in the two-party system has always involved such pragmatic trade-offs, and keeping Johnson close was an understandable priority. Bogaski's analysis is a reminder that contrary to some contemporary assumptions, most black congregations were not founts of the social gospel during the civil rights struggle.

Unfortunately, this carefully researched

Reviewed by Steven P. Miller, author of *The Age of Evangelicalism: America's Born-Again Years* (Oxford University Press), who teaches history at Webster University and Washington University in St. Louis.

manuscript is often a bumpy read. It would have benefited from more fastidious editing. Some readers will not be forgiving of the book's numerous typos and Bogaski's confusing use of semicolons. Perhaps these and other minor errors can be corrected in a more affordable paperback edition.

The author closes on a theological, even pastoral note. He considers how church leaders might approach the pressing matters of their times. Prophets "must first learn to connect with those they seek to awaken from moral slumber," while priests should "not so quickly yield this world to Caesar, or the Devil." Bogaski is harder on the priests. To be sure, he chides mainline officials for their impatience and black church leaders for their reticence, but only evangelical conservatives come under fire for the content of their beliefs. One senses that Bogaski is sending a message here: moral clarity is sometimes another form of cheap grace.

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## Crimes on the home front

I've been obsessively watching *Foyle's War*, a British detective series that takes place on the home front while World War II rages on the continent. The show started in 2002 and will offer a ninth season in 2015 (the eight previous seasons are available on Netflix).

Christopher Foyle (Michael Kitchen) is the detective chief superintendent responsible for investigating crimes in Hastings, a town on Britain's southern coast (almost half of its 65,000 residents were evacuated in 1940). The show explores crimes made possible by the war. In one episode, a fire brigade responding to enemy bombing is stealing items from victims' homes. In another, a secret government weapons program goes awry and officials cover up the release of toxic chemicals in the countryside. The series punctures the myth of the "good war" by showing that while the lads were off doing their bit, others were doing for themselves.

The show has a rhythm: Foyle has to solve the case, get someone he cares about off the hook, and restore justice to Hastings and to the war effort. He inevitably succeeds, usually giving a rousing speech about how he solved the case while the culprits express amazement and sometimes remorse. The moral formula is as satisfying as the cinematographic one.

Foyle is understated, humble, patriotic, and smart—not manic-genius smart, like Sherlock, but hardworking gumshoe smart. He notices things others miss, reads motives, and knows when he has sufficient evidence and when he doesn't. He coaxes a confession out of a criminal in one scene and casts a beautiful fly at his favorite fishing spot in the next. He has a deep sense of right and wrong and somehow manages not to be made cynical by the moral outrages that he witnesses.

*The author is Jason Byassee, senior pastor at Boone United Methodist Church in Boone, North Carolina.*

The contemporary relevance of the show hinges on the fact that the war is sometimes cited as a reason for letting injustice triumph. A criminal must be let go or the war effort will be hurt. A company had to commit illegal acts to make sure the Jerries don't win. These arguments are used to shield the fact that those with corporate, military, or government power are simply using that power to personal advantage. Foyle won't stand for it.

An episode in season six has a character based on Anglican bishop George Bell, who risked charges of treason by arguing against the indiscriminate bombing of German civilians after the war had turned in the Allies' favor. The bishop gives an impressive theological defense of just war and against fire-bombing, even citing Bonhoeffer. We now know about hundreds of thousands of civilian casualties in places like Dresden, and in retrospect we're inclined to sympathize with the German civilians in the show. But as soon as we do, new evi-

dence emerges that changes the situation. Bishop Bell may have been right, but the show keeps the moral complexity alive.

I love how the show portrays Brits' pluck in the face of Nazi power, their ability to joke in the midst of despair. I want a Christopher Foyle in my corner who can see all and, with barely a twitch of the side of his mouth, can tell us the precise truth about the world. But are there really people like Foyle?

Maybe my hope is too anemic. In the real world there was a German POW in Britain named Jürgen Moltmann. Local British families were inviting prisoners for a meal and hospitality, and Frank Baker, one of Methodism's greatest historians, invited Moltmann to his home. Moltmann relearned the Christian faith at his enemy's table. "The seed of hope was planted in my heart in the home of Frank Baker."

Perhaps real hope is even more outlandish than Inspector Foyle's moral certitude.



**GLOBAL WAR, LOCAL CRIME:** British police detective Christopher Foyle (Michael Kitchen) probes murder, espionage, and treason during World War II.

by Philip Jenkins

**W**hen Pope Francis visits the Philippines in January, we will undoubtedly hear a great deal about that country's importance on the global religious scene. Partly that's a matter of raw numbers. Already one of the world's three largest Catholic nations, it may by some measures lead the pack within a quarter century or so. By 2050, there could be 100 million Catholic Filipinos.

The church also has a charismatic leader in Luis Antonio Tagle, archbishop of Manila. Only 57, he features prominently in speculation about the next papal election, whenever that might occur. If Tagle is not chosen, it is likely that some Filipino will become the first nonwhite pope since the early Middle Ages.

John Allen, the superbly informed expert on all things Catholic, rightly stresses the central role of the Philippines in the Catholic future. He also warns that the Philippine experience belies any Western hopes that culture wars and church-state conflicts might fade in consequence of rapid social change. The Philippine church is powerful and politically influential, priding itself on its heroic role against the Marcos dictatorship of the 1980s. In recent years, the Philippine hierarchy has been consistently at war with the national government over official attempts to expand access to contraception and over sex education

in the schools. Threats of excommunication have been flying. Contraception is still a primary battlefield of cultural politics; same-sex marriage is barely even discussed.

In numerical terms, the Philippine church seems set for future growth, especially when set against other major Catholic nations. Unlike Catholics in Brazil or Mexico, Filipino Catholics have faced little serious competition from either insurgent Pentecostal denominations or secularization. While the country is a haven of very traditional Catholic faith, the church ably accommodates believers who might be tempted to defect to Pentecostal movements. It successfully channels dissent into its very powerful lay orders, which offer members a vibrant charismatic experience within a Catholic framework. To use corporate language, the Philippine hierarchy has done a superb job of customer retention.

On the basis of recent history, then, it's not too wild a leap to suggest that the Catholic future is Filipino.

But that projection comes with a couple of caveats. Some issues now only on the horizon may well become significant. One of these distant shadows is demography. Over the past century, the Philippine population has swollen from perhaps 9 million in

1914 to 100 million today, and that number is projected to grow to 150 million by 2050. Mainly, that growth is due to high fertility rates. In 1960, the average Filipina woman could expect to have seven children during the course of her life, and as recently as 1983 the rate was still 5.1, giving the country a classic Third World population profile.

Since the 1980s, though, the fertility rate has plummeted. It is 3.1 today—still high by global standards, but most projections suggest a continuing decline, which will soon fall below the replacement figure of 2.1. Demographically, the country is moving toward European conditions, although with a lag of several decades behind Spain or Italy.

Most observers would see fertility decline as a good thing, resulting as it does from a growing emancipation of women, who participate more fully in the paid workforce. Yet a collapse in fertility rates correlates neatly with secularization. The more people separate marriage and sexuality from the obligation to beget and raise children, the further removed they become from church teachings. The Philippines is still not close to European secularism, but developments over

the next decade or so will bear watching.

The Philippine church is also starting to face criticisms of a kind very familiar in the West, albeit on a limited scale. Although child abuse scandals have been limited, Cardinal Tagle has asked astutely whether cultural constraints might have made victims reluctant to report abuse. He has publicly warned fellow bishops that they should take preemptive action rather than waiting for "a bomb to explode." As Ireland has shown in recent years, such a bomb can quickly bring antichurch criticisms into daylight.

We might see auguries of approaching trouble in the scandalous success last year of Aries Rufo's sweeping exposé *Altar of Secrets: Sex, Politics, and Money in the Philippine Catholic Church*. (Most of the sexual content of the book involves adult heterosexual relationships, rather than child molestation.) Little in the book is terribly surprising, but what is remarkable is that so much dirty ecclesiastical laundry is now being washed publicly, and that consumers are buying the book.

The Philippine church seems to be in robust health, but Cardinal Tagle is wise not to take that for granted.

*Philip Jenkins's Notes from the Global Church appears in every other issue.*

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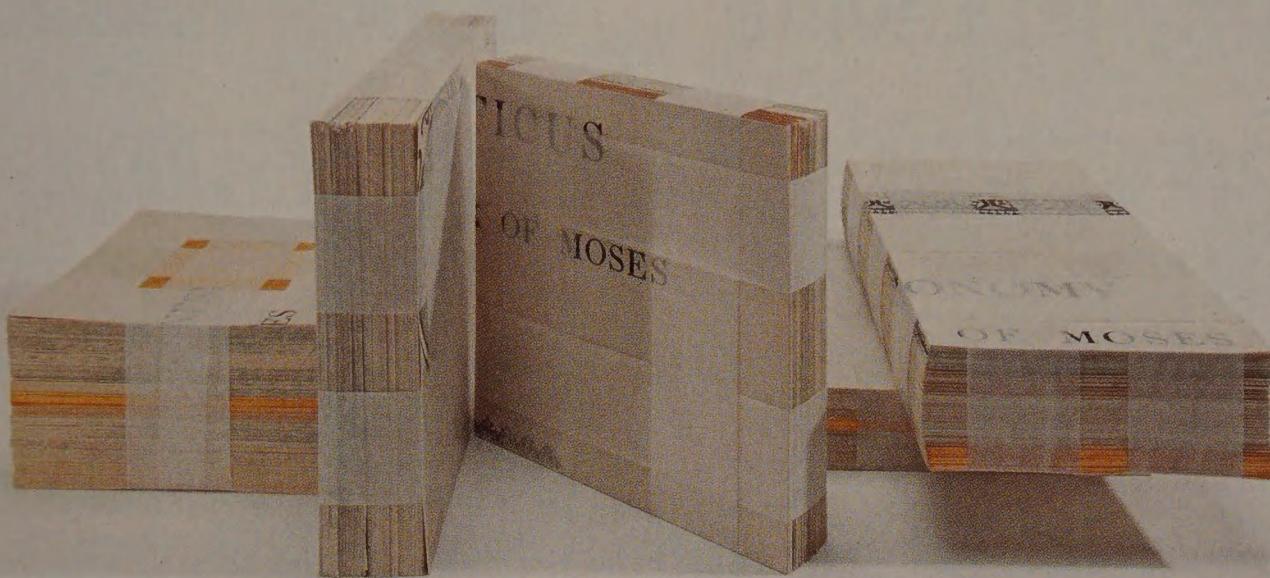
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*Art selection and comment by Lil Copan, a painter and editor in Boston.*

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